



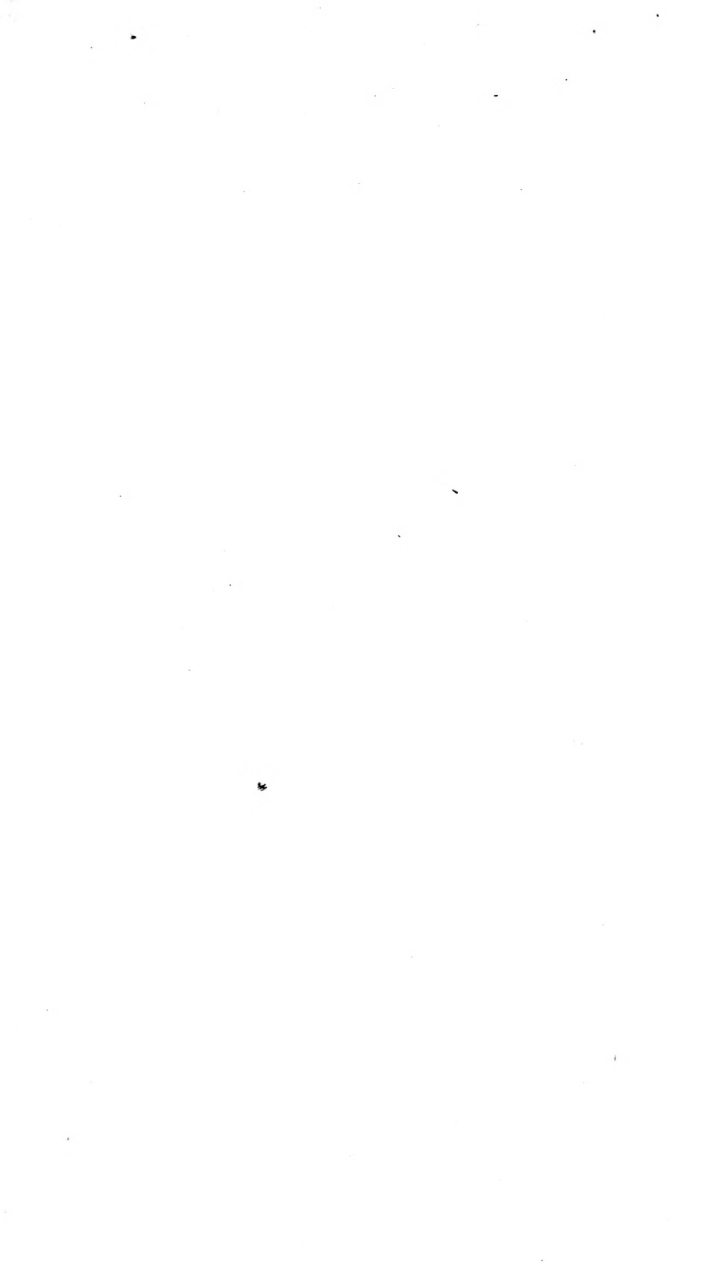


LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF ILLINOIS

823

C923

v.2



THE CURATE OF SADBROOKE.

VOL. II.

THE CURATE OF SADBROOKE.

"At least, not rotting like a weed,
But having sown some generous seed,
Fruitful in further thought and deed."
TENNYSON'S "*Two Voices*."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

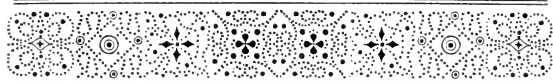
VOL. II.

LONDON:
HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,
SUCCESSORS TO HENRY COLBURN,
13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1865.

The right of Translation is reserved.

LONDON :
PRINTED BY MACDONALD AND TUGWELL, BLENHEIM HOUSE,
BLENHEIM STREET, OXFORD STREET.



THE CURATE OF SADBROOKE.

CHAPTER I.

THE MIDNIGHT KNELL.

THE evening passed away much like others at the little cottage, after Mr. Quaver's departure. The widow herself continued hard at work at the braiding, at intervals jerking the net still further over the table, till there became quite a heap of work on the other side.

The lodger sat in the window, reading his paper and smoking his pipe, until it

grew dark, when he changed his seat for that which had been occupied by the little tailor, and continued the same occupation.

Jem brought in some pitchers of water, ready for his mother's washing the next day ; doing it in his usual lazy way, and coming between whiles to warm himself at the fire.

The meals of tea and supper came in their usual routine—the little black teapot with old tea leaves was re-filled for the widow ; there was the stale loaf and bit of dry hard cheese for herself and the boy. The same fare, rather newer, and with the addition of a cup of beer, sufficing for the man.

The widow had lived a hard life since her husband's death ; it would have been well for her could she have continued satisfied with it, but a way of making money, not unsuited to her own views of

right and wrong, had been offered to her by her brother, and she chose to accept it.

So the evening wore away; the one little dip candle threw a scanty light, the spare fire gave but a scanty warmth, the poor fare was but a scant sufficiency, yet it was hard work to earn even that at the never-ceasing braiding, and she worked on far into the night. She had no high amount of principle, very little thought of religion. She had to work for herself and her boy, and had done so for many years. Now he was getting big enough to work for himself, it would be a good thing for her, and much better for him. Her favourite axiom was, "Poor folks mustn't be particular." So with this idea, she did not much care about Jem's going to school, or to church either—poor folks could not be expected to go

on like rich ones. He had better go to church sometimes—it was respectable.

Poor Mrs. Brown! she knew no higher reason. Was it then likely her going would do her much good? Was it likely her teaching would benefit her boy? And yet she would have done anything for him that was in her power. But how could she teach that which she knew not? She called herself an honest woman, would have been very much offended had any person told her she was otherwise; and in some respects she was honest—she would not have taken anything that she considered actually belonged to another; but, like too many of us, she had her own code of morals, her own idea of right and wrong. And it was part of this code that wild animals that had no fixed home belonged to no one in particu-

lar, but to the whole community in general.

She could not see why Squire Knightly, or Squire Wells of Sadborough, or anybody else of their class, should have more right to the pheasants or partridges than her boy Jem, if he could catch one; nor could she see why the king, as she phrased it, were to make money by allowing folks to shoot at what by rights was anyone's who could have the luck to catch the creatures. "But if you wasn't let to shoot 'em, why, of course twouldn't do to make a noise;" but there were other ways—a bit of horsehair were got easy enough, and did it quiet; and how could a lone woman live, if she didn't make the most of the things that Providence had put in her way?—and now they were come to Sadbrooke, and had got this chance, she hoped they should get on better.

Widow Brown's brother was suspected by all the gentry round of being a regular poacher, and no doubt it was he who had impressed his views upon his sister; and probably it was with the idea that she and her boy might be able to assist him that he had allowed her to come and live at his cottage.

Therefore, when Jem and the one-eyed lodger went out, as they had done several times before, for their night's work, she was very well satisfied to see them leave, and shortly after put by her work and went to bed.

They went on side by side quickly through the village, passing by the ruin of the farm, and, crossing a field above the church, were soon out on the heather, and in a place sufficiently lonely not to fear being overheard.

“I say, young chap,” said the man, when he was sure they were quite safe, “if you can’t keep a quieter tongue in your head, you’ll get yourself into mischief, you may depend on it; and it’s not you as will sarve my purpose—I may as well tell you that at once.”

“I only said I was bad used,” replied the boy; “and so I were. Why be I to put wi’ it?—you’s always a-telling of me not to stand of it.”

“But I’m not always telling of you to talk before strangers, a-letting such a little fool of a man as that who called in know you wasn’t pleased—why, it’s enough to be the ruin of you most, and might be. ‘Least said is soonest mended,’—that’s true enough. I only wish I’d a-known the man as said those words, he’d have been the chap for me; and we’d

a-made a fortin' going through the world together."

"But you talks enough, I'm sure!"

"If I talks, I knows what I talks about. There's no harm in talking so as to hear what other folks have got to tell; but there's great harm in talking so as to let them know what you're a-going to do; but you can't be expected to be up to that yet, so you'd better shut up, and hearken to others when they speaks."

"You be a deep chap, that you be!" said the boy, admiringly.

"It don't matter what I be. I'm a-giving you advice for your own good; if you don't follow it, and keep a close tongue, I leave here at once, and then you see if you ain't in trouble, that's all!"

"But 'twas you yourself as said I'd

been bad used, to be caned for nothing, and to have my things tookt from me—you know as you did, and said I was a fool if I stood it.”

“And 'so I say now; and haven't I promised you as you should be a match for the parson. See here what I've got with me now.”

He took from his pocket as he spoke some tools, of a kind the boy had never seen before, and he scarcely now knew what they were intended for, though he gave a good guess.

“I'm going to church just for once in a way, to make a bit of a change,” he said, with a strange laugh; “perhaps I shouldn't be respectable-looking enough to be let in all regular-like on Sundays, when the people are all dressed, and the parson's there, too, and mayhap I shouldn't

like it nother, so I am thinking of looking in to-night."

Jem was a little nervous at the thought, but still his heart leapt with a feeling of joy at the idea of being even with the parson; besides, he would have been ashamed to say he was afraid, so he gulped down the feeling as well as he could, and inquired—

"What shall we do when we get there?"

"You said one day there was a money-box behind the door, and when I've a-tookt all the trouble and opened it, I mean to give you the first dip in, to pay you for your property as you say you've lost, and to show you that I mean fair and upright by you; and if that is not acting handsome, I don't know what is."

The proposition did not come on him altogether suddenly—it had been hinted at before; but now that the time was come, he started at what was before him. It would be the first plunge into what he himself knew was actual guilt—it was the taking a step which even he knew was one that could not be recalled; but then came other thoughts—he had been brooding over revenge, and had felt helpless as to it ever being in his power; now it was offered to him, the returning evil for what he considered had been evil, suited his state of mind just then exactly.

Besides, there was something for him to gain—the thought of possessing money in a way he never had before was delightful. There might be gold in the box—there was a sight of money, no doubt. What could he not do with it?—new clothes,

cakes—even that came into his mind. His thoughts wandered on. He would leave Sadbroke, and go out into the world, and come back with a fortune—he felt at that moment as if his fortune was made.

“I’m not a-going to talk any more if you do that,” he said.

“’Twill be worse for you if you do, that’s all; there ain’t no danger for me, I’m safe enough. I’ve plenty to help me, I can go anywhere most, and find friends; but if you split, whether I’m alive or dead, there’s they as will never leave you safe—never! and that you may trust is the real truth, if I never speak again.”

So he led him on, partly by threats, partly by promises. The boy was terrified—he would almost have gone back then if he could; but he could not, he knew he

was in the man's power; besides, he could not resist the temptation of the money. There would be enough to make him happy; he would never do so again, he would do this one thing, he could be honest like other people if he had money enough to be so. This has been Satan's temptation oftentimes; verily he was whispering to Jem's heart then, and the man walking by his side so clear before him in the bright moonlight, was he not the visible emissary of the Evil One? They went on a little further, they were not going to do much that night—only look at a few snares and reset them. But they were tolerably fortunate; a hare, a brace of partridges, and some rabbits, were quickly taken out, and the traps reset.

“They'll be ready for market to-mor-

row," said the boy. "I believes myself as the gentlefolks who buys 'em knows often enough where they comes from, but they don't mind so as they gets 'em cheap."

"Of course they knows; and of course they don't mind. 'Tis our work to catch, and not to care who buys; and 'tis theirs to pay for 'em, and not to ask no questions; that's what I call a fair division of labour."

Jem had certainly not been brought up with any very particular views of right and wrong, but there was something in the way this man put things that was new to him. They retraced their steps, and the man put the bag with the game in under his loose coat, in, case of their meeting anyone. As they came out of the field, he said—

“I shall just go round the farm ; fifty pounds ain’t offered every day, and there may be something to find.”

Jem would rather have gone home, he was feeling anything but comfortable, but his companion called to him to come on. It was very still and quiet in the farm-yard as they walked round, and they found nothing, so, in about half an hour’s time, they came out, and, crossing the road, entered in at the little wicket-gate of the churchyard.

The man went on, and Jem followed. The moonlight shone very ghost-like, he thought, on the white tombstones ; again he wished he was at home, he rather lingered, but the man told him to come on.

“No one will touch us to-night,” he said ; “if we were even seen, your good

village folks would only think that the White Lady you told me of was taking her walks."

They went up the little path straight on to the porch of the church. The man took out his tools and keys; he put a key to the lock of the door, when suddenly, before he could turn it, as if his putting it in had been the cause, a bell tolled out heavily, loudly, stroke after stroke—on, on, one after another—the heavy death-toll of the knell.

To say that they were both startled and terrified would be hardly enough. Coming on them then, at the very moment when they were attempting sacrilege, mingling as the tolling did with the striking of the clock that was sounding out the hour of midnight, it was enough to startle very strong nerves, and to awake a feeling of

superstitious awe in the minds of the most hardened. But after a minute or two the man recovered himself, and speaking softly to his companion, strove to get him away from the place. But even he shrunk from the look of horror upon the boy's face; it was something he had never seen before—the trembling, crouching figure was one on which, even then in his anxiety to leave, he could not vent his anger.

He shook him and tried to rouse him; it was in vain; he put his arm round him and endeavoured to move him; the boy kept his hands to his ears, exclaiming—“The bell!—the bell!” And close over their heads, startling the quiet of the midnight air, rang out the sound of the heavy tolling knell. At length, losing all patience, and seeing that the people in the village were being aroused, he took hold of the

boy's arm, and dragged him forcibly away.

It was with difficulty they reached the cottage without being seen, and then the boy fainted. His mother, roused from sleep like the rest of her neighbours, got up, and came down, and they gave him the best they had in the house, and after a time he recovered; but all that night would he start continually from his sleep with the one wild cry—"The bell!—the bell!"

His mother was shocked; she knew nothing of the attempt on the church, but she saw he had been fearfully frightened; and she said going out of a night was too much for him, and he should never do so again. The man thought it was his youth; he was not accustomed to much yet, when he grew older he wouldn't mind little frights.

But are there not things we can none of us explain—unseen influences that have power over us in a way we cannot understand? Some people talk of mesmerism, and of animal magnetism, using words of which they know very little; yet the one thing is sure, from some cause we know not of, that which is so fearful to one is no object of terror at all to another. One laughs lightly at that which strikes a death chill to another's heart; an accidental word carelessly spoken by one seems full of inconceivable meaning to the person to whom it is addressed.

This is something different from constitutional nervousness; the strongest-minded, the bravest have come under its influence, when the frailest and weakest have escaped. Why should this be so? The event that happened, the word that was spoken, had

a meaning, though a sealed one, for the one ; it had no meaning, no message, for the other. In some cases this may be retrospection—the mind looking back, though perhaps unknowingly, on some circumstance that has been. But oftentimes it is not memory reverting to the thing that is past, it is the mind trembling under the foreshadowing of the future, bending under the pressure of the unknown ; but which, when it comes in its reality, will explain the dread. It was so at this time, and in this case.

That bell to Jem's heart was the foretelling of the thing that should be. The day was to come when that man and that boy would know, though the boy would be then scarcely conscious of what was passing, why the sound that fell so lightly on the ear of the one should strike

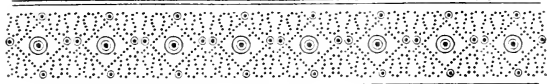
such agony to the heart of the other. The knell would be at one time heard, of which this was the precursor.

And yet, perhaps, it was sent to him as a warning. He was not driven upon his fate; no life was ever wasted and misspent for time, no soul ever lost for eternity, but with its own will, and at its own accord. Had that warning been taken, that echo in his own soul hearkened to, that night might have been the beginning of a new life. The good angel was even then hovering near; the guardian spirit waiting to be entreated. Neither on earth was he alone in the warfare. At that very time, at that very midnight hour, there was one praying for a blessing upon his people, seeking it especially for the boys of his school, and more than others for this erring one. But it was the same tale as of old time. "Why

will ye die? Why will ye not turn and repent?"

And out from the eternal heaven the clear cold moon looked down on the unquiet earth, where the boy lay moaning in his restless sleep, where the pastor was praying for his flock, while above and around them both, unseen, yet not unfelt, the struggle was going on between the Evil and the Good. Yet he for whom so much was done, was unwilling to unite in the supplication. No yearning cry to heaven went up from that young heart; and the dark spirits in that hour won the ascendancy. Good angels veiled their faces with their wings, and fled away, and evil-reigned triumphant in his soul.





CHAPTER II.

THE WHITE LADY.

THE evening that the events recorded in the last chapter took place, they were but a small party at Fairleigh. The Wilmots were engaged elsewhere, and Guy and Frank were gone to a juvenile party.

Alice began talking about the White Lady.

“I have often passed there in summer-time, after the moon has been up, but one does not expect to see a ghost in summer. I should very much like to go and see whether she will be there to-night!”

“Suppose we take Alice, James,” said

Hamilton. "I don't think it will hurt her, as it is such a fine night, and then her mind will be at ease respecting the ghost."

"I will take a walk with you willingly," was the reply; "but I do not expect to see much. The last full moon I was rather late at Sadbroke, and thought I would come round that way. I walked all through the ruins, and even stood upon the lady's grave, but I saw nothing, though I had a lovely walk through the avenue, with the moonbeams shining on the water."

"If any one saw you, they must have wondered," said Cecil. "They could not have taken you for the White Lady, but you must have been a ghost, no one ever walks there on the night of the full moon."

“They thought him father confessor of the sweet nuns of St. Catherine, of course,” said Hugh.

“Are you coming with us?” inquired his brother.

“I should like it extremely, but I have promised my father a game of piquet, and it would not be right to disappoint him.”

“I would come, James,” said Cecil, “but you said the Greek was all wrong to-day, so I am going to work hard this evening.”

The three others, therefore, set off by themselves. There was a short cut across the fields, but as there was a white frost on the ground, they took the road on Alice’s account. Hamilton had never heard the ballad of the Earl’s daughter, though he well knew the legend, so James and Alice tried to assist each other’s memories

and repeated it to him. Very lovely did the ruins look in the moonlight, the walls, and the poplar-trees reflected in the clear water.

“Has there been a sketch made of this by moonlight, James?” asked Hamilton.

“One, I believe, but I have never seen it.”

They lingered a little, but no ghost appeared, and they were going to return, when Alice turned round for one more glance.

“Look! look!” she screamed, grasping Hamilton’s arm in terror.

They both turned. From the angle of the ruins emerged a figure with a long white shroud thrown over the head, and hanging long down; quickly did it pass into the poplar avenue, and walking on, clearly to be distinguished in the bright moonlight, passed through the arched gate-

way, and was lost to sight behind a large tree.

“What a scandalous trick!” said Hamilton.

Alice could not speak, she clung with both hands to her lover’s arm, looking up with tearful, dilated eyes into his face; but her look deprecated the idea that the appearance was any other than that of the lady herself.

“You don’t really believe in it, Alice?”

“I think it quite unbelieving not to do so,” she said, half sobbing. “I’ve seen it myself now; I never did doubt it before, but now I am sure of the fact.”

Hamilton would have been over the gate, to endeavour to throw some light on the appearance, but could not possibly leave Alice in such a state of unmistakeable terror, but he was certainly surprised to see James take it so quietly.

When Alice had recovered a little, they retraced their steps homewards. Very comfortable the warm house felt after the cold night air. Alice hung up her cloak and bonnet in the hall, and they entered the drawing-room together. Hugh's voice was speaking as they came in.

"A sezième, sir, that will do, I suppose?" said he, shewing the cards.

"Undoubtedly!"

"And four queens—they are good, I know. It's my game, there's no need to play the cards."

They were thrown on the table to be mixed together, taken up again, formed into new combinations, and so on, much like the scenes in our own lives.

"Those cards must be shuffled well," said Mr. Knightly; "there is no play when they run so in suits."

“There is certainly something in the cards, but I put out very well, I think, that hand,” said Hugh. “I see, even in piquet, it is necessary to give undivided attention to the game.”

“Had you a pleasant walk?” said Mr. Knightly, addressing the others, while his son was dealing. “I suppose, however, you saw nothing?”

“Oh! papa, we saw the White Lady—saw her really come from the convent, and walk all down the avenue! We really all saw her!”

“Saw what, my dear, eh?” said her father, absently, taking up his cards.

Mr. Knightly had certainly no faith in ghosts; he had asked about their walk as a polite attention on their return, but expecting to hear the usual reply of a pleasant walk, and nothing to be seen, had not listened at all for an answer.

“We undoubtedly saw a figure,” said Hamilton, “although I do not agree with Alice in calling it her. I feel sure it was some one playing a very foolish trick.”

“Oh! William, how can you say so?” said Alice, earnestly; “I call it really wicked not to believe in these spiritual presences—we know there are such visions to be seen. I am always afraid something will happen to those who do not put faith in these messengers from the unseen world.”

“I shall have the place watched the next night of the full moon,” said Mr. Knightly.

“I don’t think the ghost will be here next full moon,” said James; “most probably he will be quietly studying in his chambers in London.”

Hugh looked sharply round, but imme-

diately after was again immersed in his occupation.

Mr. Knightly laughed.

“So that was the reason I had to wait for my game, was it?” he said; “but if you wish to play, Hugh, pray attend now. Is this point good—five cards?”

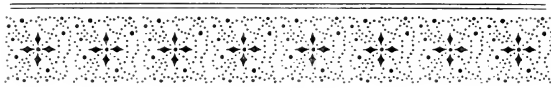
“Oh! how cruel it was of Hugh!” said Alice to Hamilton, not wishing to interrupt the players. She was now sitting on a little stool by the fire, and hardly able to keep herself from crying. “And such a wicked trick! But it has not shaken my belief in the least; it is not because he acts so wrongly that such things are not—we know so little about them. I always was very superstitious.”

“How did you find us out, James?” inquired Cecil.

“It would be difficult, I believe, for

me to see any trick played," replied his brother, "without thinking you were in some way implicated in it; but what I object to in such a trick as this is that it makes ignorant people believe in what is false, and that must always be a wrong thing. If any one besides ourselves was in the road at the time, they will in future have full faith in having seen the ghost."

A man and woman were walking in the road. On seeing the figure, the woman showed it to her husband—she had often seen it before, she assured him, and he fully believed her. They hardly thought it worth while to repeat the story to their neighbours, so fully did the people of SADBorough believe in the truth of the vision of the White Lady.



CHAPTER III.

SPECIAL PLEADING.

THE morning-room at the Grange, Mrs. Wilmot's residence, was very bright and cheerful—one of those pleasant rooms into which the first gleams of the sun always contrive to find their way. There was a window to the east, looking over a lawn, in which were flower-beds, always filled in summer with the choicest flowers; and the window that faced the south opened into a greenhouse, which Mrs. Wilmot, who was very fond of flowers, and who liked to have everything about her in nice order, always

managed to keep stocked with a succession of pretty plants.

It was the morning after the walk to the convent; the two girls were sitting in the room, a little gleam of sun was shining in at the east window, but not enough to do anything more than look bright and pleasant, and a large blazing fire gave warmth and comfort to the place. Annie was sitting at the table finishing a drawing; and Maude had ensconced herself near the window, with her work-basket on a little table before her. She was busy netting a little crimson silk purse, in which glittered sparkling stars of steel beads. A dainty little stirrup was around the pretty foot, and her white fingers were shooting in and out a shining needle, which caught the light of the winter sun as it gleamed in on her work. In the basket before her were two other purses, just alike,

only that one was blue and the other green ; they were also starred with beads, and were trimmed up and finished to the last point of perfection.

It has been said that the Wilmots and the Knightlys lived on terms of such intimacy that the young people were almost like brothers and sisters to each other, excepting that they perhaps paid each other rather more attention than brothers and sisters would have done. The boys Knightly were generally nursing up some pet or other for either Maude or Annie ; and they, in their turn, made either purses or slippers, or bags, or anything that might be wanted for the boys.

This had not yet altogether been given up, and that Christmas Eve when Hugh drove the royal mail into SADBROUGH, he had packed up carefully by his side on the coach-box, in a cage tenderly covered up in a green baize,

a wonderful piping bullfinch, that he had brought home as a joint present for Maude and Annie. And those two little purses, Maude had made them as presents for James and Hugh. There had been much discussion respecting the colours and the decorations, and every particular that could possibly be thought of; and at last it was decided that dark blue was an ecclesiastical colour suitable for James, and that green would be very pretty for Hugh.

But New Year's day had come and passed, and the purses were in her basket still. Maude had shed many tears about them, but had not given either of them away. James was so altered of late, he was so good, so very good, he thought only of his church and his school, and the poor people of Sadbroke. It was no wonder if he had quite forgotten her, he had so much else to think of; how could he think

of her, and if he did it was only probably as a silly girl, who could not enter into any of his feelings and thoughts. No, she could not give him a purse; she wondered how such an idea could have entered her head; how he would despise it, and despise her for making such a foolish little thing! She almost thought he was unkind, only he was too good to be anything that was wrong; but she could not talk to him now as she used, and certainly could not give him the purse.

But why was Hugh's purse lying there too? Certainly not because he had been unkind. Poor Maude! she had been little more than a child when she began those purses, and if she did not feel quite like a sister towards one of the objects of her intended bounty, she was scarcely altogether aware of the fact herself; but before the day came when they were to have been bestowed, the feeling of her woman's

helplessness in the one case, and her woman's power in the other, had dawned upon her ; and so the two little purses lay still side by side in her little basket, and she was knitting another, and they were all going to a bazaar. Presently Hugh came in ; he bent over the table where Annie was drawing.

“ I am doing this for you, Hugh,” she said. “ It is the first sketch I ever did by myself. I thought you would like to have Fairleigh to hang up in your chamber when you go back.”

Annie's sketch was not badly done ; there was something spirited in the style, although Fairleigh looked rather tumbling down at one side, but of course Hugh admired it.

“ How very kind of you, Annie, to think of me !” he said ; “ but I wish you had done me one of the Grange.”

Annie was at the age when young ladies, thirty years ago, wore short frocks and long

trousers, with frills round their ankles ; and she did think it very odd of Hugh to prefer a drawing of the Grange to one of Fairleigh, which was the home where his father and mother and brothers and Alice lived, and she did not hesitate to tell him so.

“I am a queer fellow, I know—I always was, Annie ; but you may as well do me the sketch, you can send it up to me.”

Annie promised, and Hugh continued talking.

“Had you a pleasant party last evening, Maude?”

“Pretty well—nothing particular,” she replied.

“I called it very stupid indeed,” said Annie.

“Oh ! you should have been with us, we missed you dreadfully ; besides, you would have had something to talk about. Alice went to look for the White Lady !”

“ Oh ! Hugh, how can you talk such nonsense ?” said Annie.

“ It is quite true. She went with William and James ; she had never seen her before.”

“ And did not see her then, of course,” said Maude.

Hugh was looking down carefully at the drawing.

“ This window wants a stroke here, Annie,” he said. “ They did see her, Maude ; ask Alice—she believes in her existence firmly now.”

Annie looked up with her bright eyes dancing, and letting the brush fall, extinguished the window altogether that Hugh had thought wanted improving.

“ Really saw her, Hugh !” she said. “ I don’t believe a word of it.”

“ I have no faith whatever in ghosts,” said the fair-haired, practical Maude.

“Alice gave us all a lecture on the wickedness of not believing in spiritual presences. I have been half a convert myself since.”

“I am not clever, like Alice,” said Maude. “I don’t understand about such matters; but I could not believe in the White Lady if I were to try!”

“Did you see her yourself, Hugh?” inquired Annie. “I shall not believe in her unless you did.”

“I never said I went; I only told you what Alice saw, and what she thought on the matter. Perhaps if you and Maude had been there, I might have gone too.”

“I wonder what you were doing?” said Annie. “I daresay it was Cecil, dressed up in a sheet. Oh! Hugh, what a shame! You can’t help laughing; you did it yourself, I do believe!”

“I am not laughing; I only told you what

Alice saw. I am in no mood for laughing. I am going to-morrow, Maude."

"Are you?" she said, resuming her work, which she had laid down while they had been discussing the ghost.

"And you don't pity me a bit," he said. "You are all so comfortable here, and when I am away I daresay you never think of me; and what a dull thing it is to be shut up in chambers, with no one to care what becomes of one."

"But you would not like to live here always?" said Maude. "You always say it's so slow here at Sadborough; and you know you must read, if you really mean to be a lawyer."

"Yes, I know I must leave home, and perhaps I should not like always to live in Sadborough—that is, all my life; but it is very pleasant to be down here, and to see my

mother making breakfast, and to have Alice, though Alice never thinks of me now; but then I can come in here, and it's all so different to being in London. I daresay, when I am once gone, no one will think of me, or care for me a bit."

Annie was trying to set the window of her drawing to rights, but she looked up again at this speech. It did seem so funny to her to hear a great fellow like Hugh wanting some one to think of him, and care for him!

"And what are you doing, Maude?" he continued, going up to her work-table. "Have you come into a great fortune, that you want so many purses?—or is not one for me? I am sure you have done one for me, to take back with me!"

"No, indeed, Hugh, I cannot spare one; they are for a bazaar."

“A bazaar! Where?”

“At Wilmington. I have some friends there who have asked me to work for one that is to be held for a church.”

Hugh lifted up his hands in astonishment.

“A bazaar for a church! What would James say?”

“Why, don’t you think he would approve of it?” asked Maude.

“Well, Alice said he was very particular about the decorations of the church at Christmas, he is so afraid there should be anything that would look frivolous; but I am quite sure he liked the way that was done—he told me himself how much he admired it; but he is very strict in his ideas in some things, you know, and I am sure he would never like a bazaar for building a church!”

“I see no harm in it whatever,” said Maude, working very industriously.

“ Well, I don’t suppose there is real harm ; but there is something in the sound that I don’t think even I quite like, though I am not so particular, and don’t know what is right in such matters as James does ; but you had much better give me one of the purses, to put my first fee in—I shall keep it, to bring me luck.”

Maude shook her head, and just then the bullfinch, who was hanging over head, gave a little chirp.

Hugh whistled, opened the cage door, and the bird, who recognised his voice, and was very tame, came out in a moment, and perched on his finger. He began “ Cherry ripe ;” the bullfinch piped, and they went on with the duet.

“ He is such a dear bird,” said Annie ; “ I never had a pet I was so fond of before ; he even makes mamma laugh, he is so very droll.”

“And don’t you like him, Maude?” asked Hugh.

“Oh! I like him very well; but Annie pets him more than I do, so of course he knows her the best.”

Hugh whistled again, the bird did the same, and presently Annie joined in, changing the duet into a trio. So they sung, and the bullfinch piped, and they went on through “Cherry ripe,” and “God save the King,” and made mistakes, and got right again, and then began once more, and so on, over and over, laughing and singing, as such foolish things will do; until Maude, who had been working as though she intended to rival Widow Brown, at length put down her needle, and began to laugh with the others.

After awhile Hugh put the bird back again into his cage, and quiet was in some measure restored.

“I am so glad you like him, Maude,” said he.

Now it was certainly very mean of Hugh to bring his little present into notice in such a manner, when he was wanting a return. But then he was learning to be a lawyer, and of course it would be his business to suggest thoughts to people’s minds, and to endeavour to bring back thoughts to their memory ; and if he could do so without seeming to suggest the ideas, why, of course, so much the better. We must not, therefore, be hard on him for his conduct—perhaps he was only practising for the sake of improvement. But it had the desired effect.

“If you wish for one of those purses, you can take one, Hugh,” said Maude ; “they are only going to the bazaar, and I can do another.”

“May I really ?” exclaimed Hugh, making

a dash at the basket, and seizing on them ;
“ which shall I have ?—you must choose for me. I had rather have the one you are doing, though, because I have seen you working at it. Are you quite sure you did these ?”

“ Oh ! yes, Maude made them both,” said Annie.

“ Then which shall I have ?” said he. “ I think it shall be the green, it looks so bright,” and he took it up.

Maude hoped he would keep it. No, he was not going to settle the business so quickly—he liked lingering over it. He put it down again. Just then a ray of light came in at the window, and fell on the dark blue.

“ It must be this one !” he exclaimed ;
“ yes, I like this much the best—I think it by far the prettiest. Don’t you agree with me, Maude ?”

She could scarcely keep back her tears.

“You can take which you like—I think them equally pretty.”

“Then this is the one. I shall take such care of it, Maude, and never, never lose it or part with it; and I shall never put any other gold in it than that curl of yours I cut off last Midsummer. How very kind of you to give it me—I am sure you did it on purpose for me—I shall always believe you did. You are coming in this evening, of course?—it is my last evening.”

Mrs. Wilmot came in whilst he was speaking.

“No, Hugh, not this evening,” she said; “the girls have both colds. I do not wish them to go out; and as it is your last evening, you will be too busy to want them.”

“Oh! no, Mrs. Wilmot, we have nothing to do, and it won’t be very cold, I am sure;

and it will be quite dull without them—it will not do them any harm,” pleaded poor Hugh.

“Oh! please let us go, mamma?” said Annie.

But mamma was very firm; she saw the little purse hanging on Hugh’s great finger, and she thought the barrister that was to be had been quite sufficiently feed for one morning’s visit.

“Then I must take leave now,” said he; “I hope you will all think of me sometimes—it seems like leaving everything one cares for behind, this going away to London.”

“I don’t believe you care for us all a bit, Hugh,” said Annie; “you have quite forgotten my drawing.”

So he took the drawing, snatching a kiss from Annie. But the days were past for such leave-taking from Maude, and he would not

see that her manner was rather cold. She did look sad, but of course that was at parting from him, not at the loss of the purse. So in very good spirits he returned home with his prize.

But could he have seen the drops that fell from Maude's blue eyes after he left, and known for what reason they were shed, he would not have been so much elated. She thought of what Hugh had said about the church—it certainly was since she had helped Alice to dress it up that James had been so much altered—yes, the more she thought of it, the more she felt sure that it was since Christmas he had been so changed; and, therefore, it must have been that he had disapproved of it. He thought her, no doubt, very frivolous, and it had been such a pleasure to her; and Alice had asked her to help. It did seem hard she should be blamed for

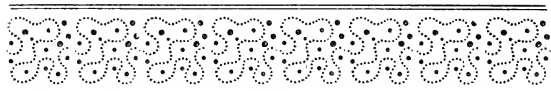
doing what she really undertook to please James. She was very glad she had not given him the purse; and there would be no harm in Hugh's having it, if he liked—they would neither of them ever be anything to her.

So Maude tried to comfort herself; but she was very sorrowful all day; and, after all, the other purses did not go to the bazaar, nor did it receive any assistance whatever from her.

They dined alone that day at Fairleigh; but Mr. Saxon and Mr. Mills came in during the evening, and the rubber was as usual made up. By tacit consent, Hamilton was not asked to join, and Hugh took his place. He somewhat ostentatiously took the little purse out of his pocket, together with his money, and laid it on the table. James was reading at the other table, sitting op-

posite to him ; he chanced to look up, and the glitter of the beads caught his eye. He recognised the little net of silk and steel that he had last seen being twined together by the fairy fingers of Maude. He looked up from it to his brother's face. Hugh was apparently absorbed in his cards ; he held a splendid hand, but probably the sight of the little purse disturbed him, for he lost his game. Presently he took it up and replaced it in his pocket ; and after that, did better. When it was out of sight, James again fixed his eyes upon his book, but it was only for a few minutes ; and then closing it, he left the room, and spent the rest of the evening in his study.





CHAPTER IV.

THE DEPARTURE.

THE royal mail left Sadborough precisely at seven in the morning, and by this conveyance Hamilton and Hugh were to return to town. It was a dark dismal morning, cold and frosty, very cheerless at that early hour; but a little before half-past six, Alice was seated at the breakfast table, with the urn singing before her, making tea for the travellers; and a minute or two afterwards Hamilton and James came in; then Hugh's step was heard, talking loudly and cheerily to the boys to keep up their spirits at the

thought of parting from him, no doubt, but rather as if his own wanted a little enlivening also.

There was a bright fire in the parlour grate, but the curtains were still down; and there were candles on the table, never a pleasant thing in the morning. Breakfast had to be hurried through; there was no time for much talking or many regrets, and the little that was eaten was taken in a snatching sort of way, with many interruptions respecting strapping portmanteaus and locking carpet bags, and many inquiries whether one thing or another had been put in. They were soon taken off by the porter, and the hall was cleared; the man sent in word the coach was ready to start.

Then came the parting—very fond and loving; and Alice went with them to the hall door, and her voice was heard sending a sobbing

“God bless you!” after the retreating figures, which brought Hamilton back for one more farewell; then, when she could see them no longer, she went back into the breakfast room to have a good cry over the fire, before the servant came in to open the shutters, letting in the grey dawn of the morning, take away the candles, and put breakfast ready in the usual manner.

The others went on quickly to the inn. It was by no means such a lively walk as that on the Christmas eve of about a fortnight before, and little Frank was half inclined to cry, partly at their leaving, and partly at the pain of his frost-nipped fingers; but a new half-sovereign slipped into his hand by Hamilton to take to school, and something additional from Hugh, with an injunction to be a good boy and to mind his lessons, brightened him up a little, and he tried to send

back the starting tears, and to behave like a man.

The coach was ready to start when they reached it, and, after shaking hands with James, the two young men mounted, Hugh's great hand actually aching for a minute from the almost convulsive pressure of his brother's slighter but equally firm knit fingers. Then the coachman came out, wrapped in his heavy top-coat and capes, the horn sounded, the coach rattled away over the paved street, and they were on their way to the great City of wealth and learning, of art and commerce, where they each hoped to find, by their own hard work, the one little nook that each would fill, and in which they might attain competence, and perhaps even fame. Why should they not reach fame?—at least, why should they not try for it? Those who do not at least aim high will do very little in the world.

It is always better to leave than to be the ones left behind. James and the boys returned somewhat drearily to Fairleigh, but the young men on the coach had much to think of, and their thoughts soon went on to other things, forgetting, in their hopes of the future, the moment of parting. Hamilton had a very fair amount of hope to keep him warm that cold day. It had been arranged at this visit, with the full sanction of Mr. and Mrs. Knightly, that at the long vacation Alice should leave her home at Fairleigh, and that the little house, which by that time Hamilton would have prepared, should, after a tour on the Continent by the bride and bridegroom, receive her as its mistress.

How he thought about this little house! how much Alice and him had talked about it that last fortnight! What a difference it would be from those dull chambers, to come home of

an evening, and have those bright dark eyes looking out for him, and to be told the day had been long and dull without him! He could hardly realise the idea. The grave, steady, sober Hamilton was in dreamland, bewitched by a dark-eyed damsel, who believed in spiritual presences, but whose actual visible presence was to be the brightness of his future life.

Hugh's thoughts were wonderfully bright, too, that morning, though very angry with himself that he had been foiled in every attempt to obtain a *tête-à-tête* with Maude. He had striven very hard to see her alone the last few days, and he could not quite understand how all his attempts had been foiled.

It was, undoubtedly, his own fault, his own stupid mismanagement; he was such a clumsy fellow, he ought to have contrived it some way or other. Maude was so young, so shy,

so beautifully reserved, she would be sure to be very quiet on the matter ; he never should have loved her as he did if she had been otherwise. He could not bear forward girls. How lovely she did look yesterday, and how the needle flashed in and out of her little white hands ! And she had given him the purse, one of her own making—she would not have done that to anyone else, he felt sure ; and now there it was in his waistcoat pocket, close to his heart—he felt for it as he thought this—and one of her own golden curls was in it—no other gold, as he had told her, should ever come into that little purse ; yet he knew it would bring him luck, he could work so differently when he thought he was working for her. How dull it would be in town ! But he would work very hard ; he had something to work for now. He did wonder how it was that James, who had had things all his own

way so long, could have left such a treasure ; but he certainly did not care for her a bit. Well, Jem was a queer fellow, almost too good, so devoted to his church and parish ; he was very glad, indeed, it was so, or he should almost be jealous of him, obliged as he was himself to go away, and without having received any actual promise from Maude. But then she must have seen how he loved her—he had not tried to hide it the least ; he was sorry he had not spoken out. What a stupid fellow he was ! but he could not mend matters now, there was no one at Sadborough, he was vain enough to think, who, in her estimation, could come into competition with himself, excepting James ; what a comfort that James did not care for her ! He should come down again at Easter ; he was determined as to that, if he only stayed a day, and then he would see her, and settle it. But it was as

good as settled now; she must know his feelings towards her, and she had given him the purse.

As the day wore on, Hamilton, notwithstanding his love, found it cold, even in his great-coat and wraps; but that foolish Hugh—though, of course, he had them all on—was conscious neither of them, nor of the cold; he was only aware that he was very warm and happy; he was in the seventh heaven of delight, and the little purse, with the gold curl, was resting close on his heart.

They reached town late at night, but were hard at work the next morning. Hamilton was not one to waste much time in dream-land, pleasant place as he had found it the day before, and Hugh would have been ashamed he should have thought him idle; so, although law did not put love out of the head of either, it yet got pretty well attended to.

Rising so much before the usual time always makes the day seem very long, so Alice was very glad when James asked her to go with him to Sadbroke, and was quickly ready to accompany him. It was the day for giving away Thompson's charity. It was given in tickets, either for clothing or grocery, as the people wished.

There was quite a crowd collected round the vestry-door as the young clergyman and his sister came up. It was surprising there should be so many old and infirm people in the village, but they always liked to come themselves when they could, the giving away the money was one of the few events of their monotonous lives ; so there they came, poor old men and women, hobbling on crutches, or tottering along with the aid of a stick. Alice thought it sad to see them, many of them looking so ill, and thinly clothed, but it

was a bright day for them, as, on their names being called over by the clerk, they came forward one by one, and stating their wishes, had a ticket corresponding to their requirements given them.

But after these came a number of claimants whose rights were more doubtful. The matter had been carefully looked into by the curate beforehand, and one by one the clerk called over the names, and each came forward and took his ticket. But in consequence of some former mismanagement of the money, there was not quite so much as usual to be given away this year, and it had been decided that, instead of depriving any former recipients of all the bounty, a trifle should be taken from each, except from the very old people, and that no new names should be put on the list.

The poor have an undeniable right to com-

plain when money belonging to them has, by carelessness respecting investment, or other cause, been made to pay badly ; but, perhaps, sometimes, losses are unavoidable. But their complaining does them little good, and often, as in this case, the blame falls on those who have not in any way deserved it.

The first who received the reduced donation was an old woman, deaf, and rather blind. She looked at her ticket, reading it with difficulty.

“Six shillings!” she screamed ; “here, measter, this bean’t mine, mine’s seven, this be a mistake ; they as be over sixty gets seven, and I be sixty-five, and more !”

“It’s quite right, missus,” said the clerk.

“It bean’t right, it be seven over sixty I’ll speak to the parson myself, ’tis my rights, and no gift at all.”

The curate came forward ; he expected this,

he was greatly vexed about it, but it had been no fault of his. He explained as well as he could ; he thought they were entitled to what information he could give, but it was not much he knew, and that he found they were mostly unable to understand.

“It is quite right, Mrs. Baker, I assure you,” he said. “I regret it as much as you can. There is, unfortunately, less money to give away this year, and the churchwardens and myself have done the best we can for you all.”

He spoke loudly, that all might hear him ; he wished them to know he felt for them, but they did not believe that, it was hardly to be supposed they would ; there must be poverty where a shilling is of such consequence.

“I’d a-wanted a blanket ; I’ve got none, or what’s as good as none, and how be I to get a good blanket for six shillings, and a bit o’

tea besides? I looks to the tea, 'tisin't much comfort I'se got, most of it be the tea, and I shan't have got none!"

She did look very wretched. Alice began feeling for her purse, it seemed so sad to have no comfort but tea, and to be deprived of even that; but her brother stopped her.

"Not now, Alice."

"Darby!" called the clerk.

A sickly-looking man came forward. He took his ticket without saying anything, either of thanks or the contrary, but when he joined the crowd outside he shewed it round, saying:

"It be the school; he do want the money for his school. 'Twasn't so in parson Grey's time, he never spent no money for a school, he gived it to they as wanted it."

"'Twasn't much parson Grey gived," said a woman. "They be all alike. How warm

he and his sister do look in there, while we be all out in the cold !”

“ It’s a shame,” said one, going away with his ticket, and talking to some others, who were also on their homeward road, “ to take away a poor man’s money for a school ; no good won’t come of it.”

“ Didn’t ought that it should,” was the reply.

“ And terrible cold weather,” said the woman who wanted the blanket, drawing her thin shawl round her, “ to be taken off short ; but they’ll want it themselves some day, it’s to be hoped ; it always comes back to they as takes from the poor.”

But this was all said in a low tone ; there was great muttering and discontent, but they did not, with the exception of a very few, wish their grumbling overheard. When the usual applicants had been attended to,

a few more claimants appeared, and among them Widow Brown.

“There’s no more to be given away to-day,” said the clerk, shutting the vestry door.

“No more! and there’s four dead this year, and none to take their place—why’s that?” was the inquiry.

“Mr. Knightly have told you as the money’s short, and you may so well go.”

The curate had gone into the church; he did not wish to hear any more of this, and he was really sorry for the people.

“It is very sad to hear such quarrelling for such a mere trifle,” said Alice. “The people must be really in want, James, or they would not think so much of a shilling or two, and then not to get it if it is of so much consequence, must seem very hard.”

“I am afraid they are in want, nothing else can excuse them; but ignorant people are just

like children, they have no control whatever over their feelings, they say just the first thing that comes into their minds, without considering whether it is right or wrong."

"I suppose if we were really in want of anything ourselves, we should not stop to consider much what we said, when we were disappointed as to receiving it. I never feel much inclined to be angry with poor people, because our circumstances are so different, we cannot at all tell what they feel."

"They are—that is, some of them—feeling wrong now, there is little doubt of that; but as to being angry, it would be simply ridiculous. To be angry with poor people for ignorance, which we have not attempted to scatter, would show that we are equally ignorant and ill-conducted ourselves; and having had more means of instruction, of course it is less, far less excusable."

“ I do not like to see them so disappointed. May I not give some of the poor things a trifle? I do not like to think of their being really in want.”

“ I have got down the names of all who have been losers, and shall not forget them ; but this charity is none of mine, and I have no right to interfere. I never should have allowed the thing to get into such confusion had I had anything to do with it, and I wish to keep as clear as I can of the matter ; but if you like to help some of them after a little while, it will be very kind of you.”

They presently left the church. Several of the people were still loitering about, and they received many bows and curtseys. Some looked really pleasant, but many were quite ready to blame the new parson, though few were otherwise than very civil to him when they saw him. He spoke to most of them, calling

them by name, and saying something kind, and inquiring after them in a friendly manner. He then took Alice to the girl's school. He wanted her opinion on all the mysteries, as he called them, of hemming and stitching. She looked at the work, told him it was very fair on the whole, and the mistress seemed very glad to see her.

“It was very unsatisfactory,” she had told a friend before, “to have no one come to look at the work. Mr. Knightly was particular enough, no doubt, about his own things, but he seemed to think work must come natural to girls, and gave her no praise, though she had taken trouble enough, for sartain.”

So now, as she showed the work to Alice, she said with emphasis, that it was a pleasure to have a lady who understood it, come and look over the girls; and she was very

much obliged to Miss Knightly for calling.

“I’m not thought much of here, you see, Alice,” he said with a laugh; “but you shall come now and hear the boys, they are certainly getting on.”

He was much more at home with them, and short as the time had been, the school was almost in order; though the entrance of Alice, who had never been there before, upset them a little. They answered some questions very fairly, and she was quite surprised.

James had brought over some new spelling-books. These he distributed, and the boys sat so quietly pleased for awhile with their new books, that the thought came into his mind, as he was instructing the first class, what a good account Alice would take home of the school. But just then he heard voices louder than he at all approved of; the words,

“ ’Tis !—’t isn’t !—I will !—you shan’t ! ”
caught his ear. There was a crash—a form thrown over ; a spelling-book, with several leaves torn out of it, was lying on the ground, and the combatants, who had quarrelled as to the possession of the book, over which they had been looking amicably the minute before, were pitching into one another, like two young Turks as they were !

Well, the school was not quite in order yet ; but it could hardly be expected. He wished they had been quiet while his sister was there ; but he need not have feared her opinion being against him. Most things that he did were right in her eyes. She had one cause of anger against him—there was one matter respecting which she was most anxious to reprove him, but it was not the school, nor in any way connected with the parish.

They called then at a few cottages—one

of these was the one where the woman had promised him a few days before that mayhap she would send some of her children. He had inquired what the family were, and had heard they were very poor. The room was just as dirty and wretched-looking as when he was there before; but the master of the house was now at home—he was out of work—sitting over the dying-out fire, with his hat on his head, smoking a short pipe, and looking miserably hopeless.

The woman opened the door with a baby in her arms, and another child was hanging on to her skirts. Having made acquaintance the last time, she was much more civil now.

“Let go there!—be a good child!” said she, to the one who was pulling her dress, “and let the lady and gentleman come in, do ’ee!”

And with this she tried to open the door

wider, but the hinge was broken, so it only dragged a little ; but they managed to get in. As she did so, Alice was startled—she thought the woman was taken suddenly frantic, for making one stride across the room, with the baby on one arm, with her other hand she gave a blow to her husband's hat, and knocked it off his head ; but then, turning round to Alice, she remarked—

“ He's not used to gentlefolks—that's it, miss ; he don't mean no harm, but he've got no manners—that's it ! ”

The man sat on, not moving, scarcely looking ; the hat rested for a minute or two between his shoulder and the wall—presently he moved a little, and it then fell on the ground.

Some inquiries were made about the children. Alice tried to speak to a little girl who was there.

“Her be terrible pla—in, miss; and so be her things, too,” was said.

It was an undoubted fact as regarded the child herself, a poor, sickly, squalid-looking little thing; but neither speaker or hearer understood the expression as bearing that meaning.

“What is the matter with her?” asked Alice.

“Her’ve had the hooping-cough shocking bad, but her’s better now; and I wouldn’t mind sending her to school, as the parson do wish it, but he’s out of work, and her arn’t got no things.”

By “he” she always intended her husband; it was the way in which she always designated him. The parson certainly was not out of work; if he wished for it, there was plenty for him. Alice promised a frock, and the business of the child’s going to school was settled.

Her brother, meanwhile, had been attempting to draw the man into conversation ; but it was a difficult task—when all remarks have to be made by one party, and the other answers only in monosyllables, or else not at all, the thing is not easily done. Perhaps he was somewhat annoyed at having his residence so invaded ; people always do feel uncomfortable in society that is above them—they do not know how to conduct themselves, and that puts them altogether out of sorts ; and seeing a nice-looking lady and gentleman in his wretched cottage, made the wretchedness still more apparent even to him, accustomed to it as he was.

But kindness will make its way to most hearts. Stupid as he appeared, he was listening all the time to the discussion about his little girl going to school, and appreciated, perhaps, more than his wife did, the advan-

tage it would be to her. So although the curate thought he had not made much progress towards acquaintance, when he met the man, as he did, a few weeks afterwards, he was surprised to find him quite chatty, and they had a long talk respecting the weather, and how it suited the spring corn, and the "tarmits." The man looked on him now as a friend, one to whom he should not mind speaking, and telling anything that troubled him.

And this was the result of that unpromising visit! Not that the appearance of the cottage was much changed, or that any great alteration in the state of affairs took place at once; but the children went to school, which was a great point; and the parson, instead of being shunned as one who was too much above them to care for them, or to know about them, was looked on as one to be spoken

to, and whom they wished to please. It might not be a great deal that had been done, but it was a lift—they had formed an acquaintance above themselves, one who would raise their thoughts and ideas, help them on to something higher than the boundary of their present thoughts.

James and Alice then crossed the bridge, and went to Widow Brown's; the curate wanted to look after Jem; as he had told Mr. Saxon he did not like to lose one, he would not give him up without another trial. He knocked at the door. "Come in!" was the reply.

They entered. The clean cottage, with the settle and the clock, was a great contrast to the dirty place they had just left; it all looked very comfortable, but Jem's appearance threw a shadow over the whole. He was sitting over the fire, and seemed quite ill and miserable.

“What is the matter, Jem?” asked the clergyman, really startled at his white face, so changed from that of the troublesome boy of a few days before.

He did not answer.

“He be very bad—caught a chill, I reckon,” replied his mother, dropping a curtsey, but speaking rather sulkily; “and I’d hoped to ha’ had some of Thompson’s money, but I only had my walk, and lost my time for my pains!”

“I am very sorry, Mrs. Brown,” said the curate; “it should have been so. Your name shall be put down for next year, if you continue at Sadbroke.”

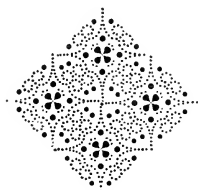
“How do I know where I shall be next year, a-worrited as I be most out of my life?”

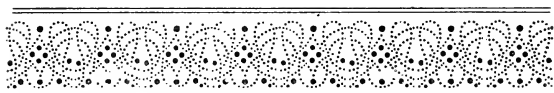
He did not reply to this, but took a chair and sat down by the boy, talking to him about school, and telling him he hoped to see

him there again, when he was better, and begged him not to waste all his life in doing nothing, but to endeavour to begin anew, so that he might be a comfort to his mother. He repeated him a text, and asked him if he could not learn it. The boy gave a sulky answer, but as soon as they left, burst into tears; he really was ill and weak, and felt utterly miserable. Another offer had been made him; could he have accepted it, then it would have been well; but the one-eyed man came in soon after, and the pastor's influence was at an end. The boy's illness and their previous knowledge of her at SADBorough were of course reasons why they did not leave the cottage without bestowing something on Widow Brown. She stood at the door curtsying as they left, but then went in remarking to herself—

“He ain't a-lost much to-day; he've a-

gived me half-a-crown, but 'twas five shillings
I ought to have had, so he's made something
out of it, arter all."





CHAPTER V.

THE BROTHER AND SISTER.

MANY men, and many clergymen, and good clergymen, too, would have felt themselves extremely ill-used and aggrieved had they been treated as James Knightly was at Sadbroke. Even Mr. Saxon considered his ideas illusory ; the farmers and the inhabitants generally made no scruple of telling him he was young, by which they meant to imply that as he gained more experience he would alter considerably ; the poor people, he fully believed that morning, considered he had robbed them of their money.

The large donation he had given to the school had been received with anything rather than gratitude ; they thought if he had so much money to give away, it would have been much better bestowed in relieving temporal want. Where there is actual bodily need people cannot be expected to value much any means offered to them for the improvement of the mind. Even those parents who never thought of sending their children to Sadborough, now stood up for the Sadborough school, saying it was quite near enough for them, they did not want any other. So it was with everything.

He was far too strict in his views for the great number—far too liberal-minded for many more. He was sharing the fate of all who attempt reform. Although those who knew him personally could not help feeling real attachment towards him, yet he was

-

perfectly aware that all his plans and endeavours for the improvement of the place in any way were regarded with doubt and mistrust. Still for all this he was not in the smallest degree angry—not the least in any way put out. It would have been quite impossible for such a feeling to have arisen in his heart. He believed, on strong conviction, that he was acting right, and he was not to be turned from his purpose by a cold look or a discouraging word. He was not a man who considered he was made a martyr of by such things, neither was he the least inclined to make a martyr of himself without cause. It was not, however, by any means because he was particularly mild or even-tempered that he felt no annoyance. There was simply no room for such a feeling.

His thoughts going on from the woman who had demanded another shilling took in the

whole of Sadbroke, the sad temporal want, the still more melancholy spiritual need, the sheep who would not come into the fold, the people struggling and striving so intently one against another for the bread that perisheth, while they were perishing, unknowing of their destitution, for want of that which was to be had without money and without price—the bread that endureth unto everlasting life.

But his thoughts did not rest even there; going on from Sadbroke, they went on, taking in the many other villages like it, the many other towns like Sadbrough—the sin and the sorrow, the suffering and the evil all around. Nor was this here alone. England, with all this, was better off than other lands. The cry was going up from the whole earth; still worse did it arise from heathen lands, homes of darkness and of the shadow of death. And so thinking, as far as could

be heard by mortal ears, there sounded to him then the one wail that is ever going up to heaven, the cry of the whole creation groaning in suffering together.

Yet even for all this sorrow and suffering there was the one remedy, the one way of deliverance—there was mercy waiting for all who would seek it; the suffering was not to endure for ever—it was the trial-time now, the bright light might ever be seen in the cloud. But how grievous, how fearful to think of the multitudes who preferred darkness to light, who chose sin rather than holiness; and the few, the very few, struggling for the good! To see the fields laying white together for harvest, and to know how few labourers were entered into the harvest!

With thoughts attuned to this height, could there be any room for such an idea as self-annoyance? The one feeling that filled

his mind, that was deeply fixed in his heart, was that of pity—pity for the perishing souls, pity for those who, thirsting and dying all around, would yet not drink of the water of life, not accept that message of love and mercy which it was for him to deliver, that message which it seemed so strange to him they would not accept, and which he was ready, in church, in the school, in the cottages, by the wayside, wherever there were ears to hear, wherever there were souls to be saved, to declare.

They were returning home by the convent, down the beautiful poplar avenue. The quiet of the scene, with the winter sunlight playing on the water, had a soft, calming influence. Alice's thoughts had gone on for some little time in much the same direction as her brother's, but they were not so high attuned; besides, it is easier to bear ill-treatment one-

self, than to see another endure the same; and the woman's feeling for the one dear to her—especially when that one is in any way wronged—came strong upon her. So after a little while she said :

“How very hard you do work at SADBROOKE, and what pains you take to impress the people, and how very ill they use you, for all your kindness !”

“They don't use me ill, Alice ; and even if they did, it would be a matter of no consequence whatever. I was very sorry for them this morning ; we know nothing of what it is to be in want, so perhaps we are hardly capable of feeling for them as we ought, but it is a pitiable sight to see people struggling and fighting for such a trifle of money.”

“I should like to have given those who lost something, very much.”

“Another time, if you like. I do not in-

tend any of them should be losers, ultimately, but I wish I could lead them to think of better things. Life is so evidently drawing to a close with many of them, and yet they have no higher thoughts than how to get another shilling, or another loaf of bread. In such cases as these the fact is painfully brought before us ; but are we not all very much the same—resting on, and caring for, only the things of earth, and thinking so little of anything that is beyond earth ?”

There was a short pause, then he said :

“ What should you say if I were to leave England, and go abroad—I mean as a missionary ?”

Alice started ; it seemed to her as if something dreadful must be going to happen to them ; if James left, the good would have departed from their house.

“ What !” she exclaimed, “ leave us all to

get on without you. How can you think of doing such a thing, James? Leave all the good you are doing here, and go abroad, without knowing whether you are equal to the work or not !”

“It does not seem as if I was of any use here, and you are all very happy without me. I think I should like it. I am talking very seriously, Alice ; it is a great work to preach the gospel to the heathen.”

“Yes, so it is, undoubtedly,” replied his sister ; “but oh ! James, if you leave your work here because the people do not treat you as they ought, or because you are tired of it, do you think you have any right to expect a blessing on other work ? It is a very serious thing to make a change, unless you are quite sure that you ought to do so.”

She was right, he knew it ; notwithstanding all his high thoughts, and they were very

high—notwithstanding all his lofty aspirations, and they were woven into his very being, still, in his desire to go abroad, the earthly was mingled with the heavenly, though it was not Sadbroke he was tired of. He felt in his heart Alice's reproof was deserved, but he would not own his weakness, nor give up the point at once.

“If all thought as you do, Alice,” he said, “there would be none to go out to the heathen, no hand would be lifted to raise the pall that hangs over them. There are plenty of good men who will preach at home, who are prevented from going abroad ; but I do not think small obstacles should be allowed to stand in the way, when we remember the really great sacrifices that have been made. Henry Martyn left his family, and ties very dear, to go out, and how abundantly has his work been blessed !”

“Of course, you know what is right much better than I do,” she replied; “but if you had heard what William was saying yesterday, I think you would reconsider the matter. He said so much of the wonderful good you were to us all. You do not know what he thinks of you, James. I am not saying this just to please you; but Fairleigh would not be the same to us if you left.”

Alice's thoughts were going on rather fast; she was thinking of the time, not far distant, when she should only come to Fairleigh as a visitor, and when, if her favourite brother were not there, it would indeed be very different.

James did not reply; his sister's praises had not elated him at all. When anyone is thoroughly out of spirits that sort of thing has rather a depressing influence than otherwise; besides, she had told him he was medi-

tating a wrong act, so he mused over the matter in silence. She therefore continued, after a minute or two :

“ William is always saying it is so wrong to change without good cause ; if you really feel it is your duty to go as a missionary, of course it is a very different thing ; but if you only leave because everything is not just as you wish here, I am sure it will be very wrong, and will only end in disappointment.”

“ I believe you are right in what you say, Alice ; I am not good enough, not fit in any way, to enter on such an undertaking, and there is quite enough to be done at home. I agree with you in that. I wish I could think I was doing the least good, I could bear a great deal, I believe, then.”

Alice knew pretty well what was wrong ; she earnestly hoped it would all be right soon.

“And Cecil,” she continued, “I never saw a boy so improved, so altered; and how he does love you! I really believe, James, Cecil will follow in your steps.”

“I am not going to act in a hurry, Alice; you need not fear that. I know we must look for disappointments. Perhaps when I got to India I should feel, as I do here, how unfit I am for the task; but if I do go, it will be with the determination, by God’s help, to carry out what I have begun. I disapprove of change quite as much as you say Hamilton does; and how steady he is!—an example, I am sure, to us all. I must try and go on steadily too.”

“It must be heavy work, I know it must, to be always trying to do good to those who are too ignorant and selfish to enter into your motives; it must drag you down, and make you feel dissatisfied.”

“It is not that, I did not expect anything more from the people at Sadbroke; and, on the whole, I think they are very kind to me; indeed, I have no fear but that, after a time, we shall get to understand each other very well. I am quite sure they do not intend me any wrong, and I am really getting fond of the place altogether. I know I should feel leaving it very much, so I will try and stay on—at least for a time.”

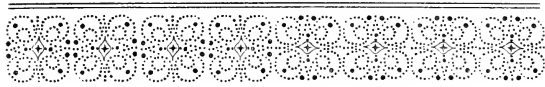
“I hope you would feel leaving all of us too, James,” said his sister. “I am sure you may be very happy here if you choose, and I hope you will think it all well over, and, at all events, not decide in a hurry.”

He went off to his study, and did think over the matter. Alice did not know what she said when she told him he might be very happy if he chose; but still if she was right in saying he was doing good in his own family,

he certainly was not justified in leaving. He did not wish to give up his present curacy, and he felt very truly, very deeply, that what she said was the real fact. Unless he sought missionary work from a different motive to that which then actuated him, he had no right to expect a blessing on his labours.

It was a great trial to remain where he was, and go on working steadily now ; but he must endeavour to do it. It was not right to leave his family and his parish for that which, shut his eyes to it as he would, was the true reason, because Hugh had become the possessor of Maude's purse.





CHAPTER VI.

WOODY KNOLL.

WILL you go with me this morning to call at Woody Knoll, Alice?" asked her brother the next morning. "I want to see Mr. Gain."

"Oh! I wish you would, Alice," said Mrs. Knightly, "and leave a card for me, and make my apologies—I so seldom go out."

"I will go willingly," said Alice, "not that I know much of the Gains."

"You had better take the pony-carriage, James," said their father; "your mother wants me to take her next week to make

some calls if the weather is mild enough, and the ponies have been out so little of late, I am afraid they will be too fresh for her."

"Pray take care of Alice, then, my dear James," said his mother.

"The ponies are quiet enough, mother," he replied, "though I daresay they will be the better for going out. I should like to go early, Alice, that I may see Mr. Gain when he comes home for luncheon."

So, precisely at one o'clock the pretty little carriage, with the pair of ponies, was at the door, and Alice was ready to accompany her brother.

As they drove through the street they met Maude. James did not draw up, perhaps the ponies were too fresh to allow of his doing so, the little creatures were very frisky, probably he jerked the reins as he lifted his hat ;

but whether or no that were the cause, they went on so quickly afterwards, as to require all the attention of the driver, and to give no opportunity for conversation.

Mrs. Gain was at home, they were told, in answer to their inquiry. There was a sound of rushing and laughing as the door opened, and they caught a glimpse of a pair of boots, and saw the vision of a flowing dress escaping through the glass-door that opened into the garden. They were shown into the drawing-room—a tolerably handsome room, furnished in very good style; and Mrs. Gain rose to receive them.

She was a pleasant-looking, and had been a pretty woman, very hospitable, and not altogether with bad manners; but there was something in her accent that annoyed fastidious people.

Woody Knoll is a very difficult name to

pronounce aright ; those who give it to their residence, should be quite sure that they are equal to the task.

“It is quite a pleasure to see you, Miss Knightly,” said Mrs. Gain ; “it is such a long time since you have been at ‘Ooden ’Ole,’ and my girls so often talk of you. Bertha will be delighted to see an old school-fellow.”

Had Mrs. Gain, when at a distance from home, named her residence to a stranger, he would probably have thought it was a log cabin under a hill ; but she by no means wished to give such an impression—she was quite vain of her house, and very fond of talking of it. She rang the bell.

“Tell Miss Gain Mr. and Miss Knightly are here,” she said to the man.

Presently Bertha came in, a little flushed ; but she was a very pretty, nice-looking

girl, and the colour was not unbecoming to her. She rather failed in her efforts to recover her composure, but did her best to talk to Alice.

In a few minutes, Mrs. Gain, who was sitting opposite the window, said—

“Oh ! Bertha, here is Mr. Mills coming up the path again !”

Bertha's composure nearly failed. Alice was puzzled ; she had really thought Mr. Mills had been the gentleman whose boots they had seen escaping through the glass-door.

“He had only just left—run away, you know, as you came in,” said Mrs. Gain, in a half-aside to James ; “but I suppose he can't keep away—young people are all alike. Your sister knows all about it, Mr. Knightly,” and she glanced at Alice ; “she and someone we won't name, to save her blushes—ah ! you

needn't look so grave, your turn will come soon, depend upon it, though report says you have allowed your younger brother to be before you. Oh ! fie ! fie ! you must not be so very good as quite to forget the young ladies altogether."

Mr. Mills now entered ; he had, at Bertha's instigation, jumped over the low hedge that separated the side garden from the front, so that when she came into the drawing-room, as if she had been taking a lonely stroll, he appeared quite like a chance visitor at the front door. This running away, so as not to be seen in the room together, was considered very modest, and the height of good breeding at Woody Knoll ; and it greatly increased the pleasure and, as they called it, fun of the courtship.

" Luncheon has been ready nearly an hour," said Mrs. Gain ; " and it is no use waiting

for Mr. Gain. You'll just come in and take a glass of wine, Mr. Knightly?"

He tried to decline, but it was not easy to refuse her hospitality.

"Bless me! do you think I should let your sister go, after her cold drive, without taking something?—and Mr. Gain will be in in a minute."

So as James wished to see him, he offered his arm to Mrs. Gain, as she rose, and they went into the dining-room.

Mr. Mills, with a remark as to his happiness, which made Alice turn her swan-like neck in a manner that silenced him for a little, took in the young ladies.

"You must take the bottom of the table, Mr. Mills," said Mrs. Gain; "it is your place quite, you know, when Mr. Gain is not at home."

Bertha giggled, and Mr. Mills looked shy,

and droll, and pleased, and took the seat offered to him, and began to cut the cold beef. They lived very comfortably, luncheon was very nicely set on the table, and neither Alice nor James could refuse partaking of it. Thirty years ago ladies were open to the infliction of having to take wine when they were asked.

“Your good health, Miss Knightly,” said Mr. Mills, looking admiringly at her, as he sipped his wine, after having filled both their glasses.

After a little while Mr. Gain came in. Mr. Mills offered him his seat.

“Don’t let me disturb you, Mills, you look very comfortable !” he said. “Very glad to see you, Mr. Knightly.”

And Mr. Gain, after shaking hands with his visitors, seated himself, and began the important business of luncheon.

“Mr. Gain has been wishing to see you, I know, Mr. Knightly,” said Mrs. Gain. “I am so glad he has come in before you left. You know Sadbroke is our parish church, though we generally go to Sadborough, because it is rather nearer, but we wish now very much to come to you; will you look after our seat for us? Mr. Mills admires your preaching so much. No, you needn’t look down, I am not flattering, and I don’t approve of making young people vain, but it’s true what I say; Mr. Mills is capable of appreciating your talents, and he thinks, with our young people, it is of such consequence where we go.”

“I should like to have our pew again very much,” said Mr. Gain. “It was foolish of us ever to give it up; it is the large square one by the pulpit.”

“I will name it to the churchwardens, I

know nothing about the pews myself," replied the curate.

He caught the words from Mr. Mills, "Satirical lines about the mouth," and saw that gentleman showing a little book to Bertha, who tittered as quietly as she could, and then Mr. Mills returned it hastily to his pocket. It was the little black note-book in which he made memorandums respecting his patients ; but he had a talent for caricaturing, and James had the comfortable feeling that he was represented, probably in some ridiculous manner, for the benefit of Bertha, or any one else to whom Mr. Mills should think proper to show the likeness.

"I have the greatest respect, and, indeed, I may say reverence, for Mr. Saxon," continued Mrs. Gain, to James ; "but you know he is just the least little bit sleepy. Oh ! I won't say it if you disapprove—and quite

right of you, too, not to let me speak, clergymen never will allow ladies to say anything—of course I know I am not equal to giving an opinion; but I do admire talent so! I sometimes go and hear Mr. Marks, and if you don't manage our pew for us, Mr. Knightly, I shall again, really."

"I believe you are in the parish, and are, therefore, of course, entitled to it," he replied.. "Indeed, that was one cause of my calling to-day; I wished to enlist your sympathies, and those of Mr. Gain, for my school."

Mr. Gain seemed rather out of spirits, and anxious. He replied:

"Don't trouble yourself about the people so much, Mr. Knightly, they ain't worth it, they're a rascally set!"

"They are ignorant, and want teaching sadly," he replied; he did not like to say they had been neglected, though that was the

feeling strong upon his mind. “We are not justified in leaving them without making some effort. I believe the school is a move in the right direction ; it is doing very little, I am aware, but I wish to do something.”

Mr. Gain was a very sensible man, with strong ideas of right and wrong, but just then he was much annoyed with the conduct of some of his workpeople.

“I wish you could do something for the twine-spinners, if you are clever at managing those sort of people. I have never known SADBorough in such a riotous state as at present ; this election that is coming on has set them up so ; I want to see your father about it. We are expecting one of the candidates to come and stay with us, but this cry for reform has made the people, I do believe, almost mad, and I do not think it will be safe. I wish the men would reform themselves !”

“I heard my father say something of the sort myself,” said James. “I know he dreads the election, and, indeed, they always seem to bring a great deal of ill-feeling; but I was away at the last, and my recollection of a former one is only that of enjoying the fun !”

“There won’t be much fun, I believe, this time,” said Mr. Gain. “There will be plenty of broken heads, if there is nothing worse, and I shall have trouble enough with my workpeople.”

“I have heard them complain that work is very slack.”

“We can’t employ as many as we have through the winter, but that is no reason why those we want should leave us. They are a provoking set !”

James saw it was not the time to press the school, but he was interested in his conversa-

tion with Mr. Gain, and they continued it some little time.

Alice had been engaged talking to the eldest boy, a fine, good-natured lad, who was making many inquiries about Cecil, and saying he had seen very little of him these holidays, and Alice was explaining that he had been very much engaged while his brother was at home, but she was sure he would be very glad to see him, and he must come to Fairleigh. But when James looked round for her, he found she was gone ; she had disappeared with Mrs. Gain.

“Your brother is quite engaged talking on business matters, and we are not wanted there !” said the lady, nodding towards Mr. Mills and Bertha ; “so just come with me, my love, I have something I wish so much to show you.”

She led Alice up-stairs to her own room.

“It is Bertha’s dress, my dear; you will be wanting the same thing soon, I know, and I do so want your opinion respecting it. Mr. Gain has been so liberal—there is nothing she may not have. It is so delightful to think she will be settled so near us. Mr. Mills is a good deal older than she is certainly, but he is such an excellent man; it is such a comfort to us to think of the happy home she will have.”

Alice made some slight reply, but there was never any need for another person to join in conversation with Mrs. Gain, she did it for both, answering to their looks, or manner, even sometimes, it seemed, to their very thoughts.

“Perhaps you think we have begun very soon to get Bertha’s dress ready? but I always like to be in time, we never know what may happen, and I wish to choose every-

thing myself, and then I shall know it is all right. But, my dear, why did you not bring over Mr. Hamilton to see us, it would have been such a pleasure to us?"

"Mr. Hamilton and Hugh were with us such a short time," apologised Alice.

"We should have liked to have seen him so much. Mr. Mills tells us so much about him; he was so delighted with him that pleasant evening he spent at your house—I mean when your brother went to put out the fire. How good it was of him! But I think Mr. Marks and he are quite congenial spirits; and dear Mr. Mills, too—such charming young men!"

As she ran on, she unlocked a drawer, and displayed to her visitor satin and lace enough, she thought, to dazzle her eyes, or at least raise some feelings of envy in her breast.

"There, my dear Alice—if you will let me

call you so—is it not lovely? Have you thought at all of what you shall wear yourself?—satin is so becoming; but then it is very expensive. Perhaps you would not like to give so much?—Mr. Gain is so liberal!”

Alice murmured it was so long before she should want such a dress, she had scarcely thought at all about it. She had, however, thought a little, and intended to wear plain muslin, but she wisely refrained from saying so.

“Your brother is not looking well, my love—he is too grave. I like to see young people enjoying themselves; and is it true your brother Hugh is engaged to Miss Wilmot?—I have heard the report.”

Alice assured Mrs. Gain there was not the slightest foundation for such a rumour. Hugh had only been home a fortnight, and was far too young to think of marrying—it was quite

ridiculous ; and Alice looked very grave, and a little annoyed.

Mrs. Gain wrapped up the white satin carefully, and restored it to its place, talking all the time.

“ Quite a mistake, is it, my love?—then of course I am bound to believe you. I will contradict it everywhere ; you may rely on my saying that your brothers and the Miss Wilmots are only like brothers and sisters—there is nothing like an attachment between them. I am so glad to hear the truth.”

She then drew out another silk—this time a dark blue.”

“ Her travelling dress, my dear—oh ! here she is ! What will she say to my showing you all this?—dear Bertha is so shy. I’m only showing your dress to Miss Knightly, my love,” she said, as she came in ; and, indeed, Bertha by no means seemed so shy as

her mamma had stated ; but was evidently desirous to hear Alice's opinion.

When Bertha left the room, Mr. Mills was much more agreeable.

“ I really think your school may be a very good thing, Mr. Knightly,” he said ; “ I have often wished for something of the sort. I go about and see the people a good deal, and am always glad to hear of anything that is done for their benefit.”

So they talked a little ; and then James said he wondered where his sister was, it was really time they left—they had been making quite a visitation.

They were standing now by the window.

“ Those ponies of yours are a pretty pair,” said Mr. Gain.

“ They are unsociable little fellows,” was the reply ; “ and are in a great hurry to be off. Horses and dogs never approve of their

owners making visits—they have been pawing savagely the last hour; I am afraid they will kick up your gravel sadly.”

He had been probably getting impatient himself; for the day being so cold, and their having come over so fast, had made the groom think it right to drive them up and down the lane, and they had certainly not been waiting more than five minutes; but they were evidently in a great hurry to be off.

But just as he spoke, Alice came in, and they took leave, the gentlemen accompanying them to the door—and Bertha came too. Alice got in, and James took the reins, when a large dog sprang out, and the frisky little ponies started. James could hardly jump in, but he just managed to do so. Bertha screamed; but Alice, when her brother was once by her side, knew they were all right, and looked round, laughing and nodding,

and they drove away from Woody Knoll.

“Alice is a nice-looking girl enough,” said Mrs. Gain; “but she is certainly rather ‘orty!”

“Oh! mamma,” said Bertha, “she is very elegant-looking indeed; and I do think if she is a little haughty, it improves a person’s appearance very much. Don’t you agree with me?” she asked, appealing to Mr. Mills.

“She is a handsome girl,” he said; “but she wouldn’t suit me,” and he looked lovingly and languishingly at Bertha.

“The young man is clever enough,” said Mr. Gain; “and far more practical and reasonable than I should have supposed, from his high-flown ideas. I am too busy now to think about schools, or such things; but I am by no means sure that I shall not give him some support—I really think he deserves it.”

“I am quite sure—that is, I think you will like his preaching,” said Mr. Mills.

“Oh! do show mamma that lovely head you have made of him—so droll!” said Bertha, in a whisper. But he only shook his head.

“I only did it just for you,” he said; “and now I must really be going. What will my patients think of me?”

“Oh! they will forgive, we must hope,” said Mrs. Gain; “we were all young once; and I’m sure you are so steady and attentive; and I am so glad you were here when the Knightlys called.

Mr. Gain had already left, and Mr. Mills soon followed.

“Whatever had become of you, Alice?” inquired her brother, as they drove along.

She gave him the account of the dresses.

“How women can go on as they do, is past

my comprehension," he said; "they care for nothing but dress. I do believe if they have a bit of satin to look at, it is more to them than anything else in the world. I did think you were different; but if Mrs. Gain thinks she can recommend matrimony to me by her chattering, it's a mistake, that's all!"

Alice was not able to exculpate her sex in general, nor herself in particular, from this sweeping accusation brought against them, in which she was involved, for the ponies were going so quickly over the rough lane, she could not have been heard had she spoken.

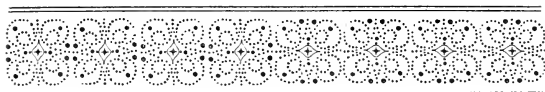
Presently her brother reined them in a little, and went on with the conversation.

"Mr. Gain is sensible enough; there is some interest in having half an hour's talk with him, though we may not altogether agree in every point; and Mills—I suppose he'll

be a rational creature again some day—that is, by-and-by, after he’s married; but if any one wants to see a fool, let him look at a man in love,” said the poor curate.

And the little ponies whisked on again at such a rate, that Mr. Saxon, who happened to see them, was almost angry; and they did not slacken their pace till they stopped at Fairleigh.





CHAPTER VII.

THE TEA FEAST.

THE evening of the day when the Knightlys called at Woody Knoll was that appointed for the tea-meeting at the chapel at Sadbrooke. There had been great preparations made for it; plenty of tea and bread and butter, and cake, and food for the mind as well as the body was provided in abundance, as the three preachers, the tinker, the carpenter, and the factory foreman, who in general paid alternate visits to the brick chapel, were to appear all together, and their hands, as they phrased it, were to be strength-

ened by the addition of a preacher from Chesterton, who was much famed in the locality.

Many a friend had called at Mr. Quaver's door that morning, with anxious inquiries after his health, and earnest hopes that he would be able to be present at the festivity ; but, poor unhappy little man, he was still laid up with a severe cold, and quite unequal to the effort.

He was looked upon by many as a sort of martyr, not with respect to taking down the cross, for that was not generally known, and he never confessed it, but because he was one injured by the Church, and therefore of course deserving of the intensest commiseration from the frequenters of Chapel.

“ But you'll take a tray, Mrs. Quaver,” said the wife of the factory foreman, who had

come over to superintend matters; "we never couldn't get along no how without you, though it's sad indeed to think of that dear man, your husband, being so bad, and all along of that there church, too."

"Ah, it's a trying time," responded Mrs. Quaver, "and for a lady with six small children, too; I hardly knows how to manage, but I hopes to do that much for you as taking the tray; I wouldn't disappoint my friends on no account, however I may be put about in managing of it."

She had been looking forward to this treat for some time, and things must have been bad indeed with her had she not gone, but it was only considered proper gentility to make a favour of it."

"I'm so flustered I hardly knows what I am doing of," said the other lady; "and we's short of cups; we looks to have a hun-

dred, and the vestry's small; we shall have to lay tables in the chapel."

"I thought you would," said Mrs. Quaver, "but them square pews is nice; but as for cups, I've enough for my own tray, and I'm a-going to use my new teapot for the first time; but I've nothing more than I want for myself, and a hundred cups and saucers is a good many to look up."

"It's a great anxiety, I may say a very great trial, to have to look after it all; but if it only goes off pretty well, I shan't mind anything I've a-done, or any trouble I've a-tookt myself," said her friend, also feeling it due to her dignity to state that she had been at a great deal of trouble, though she was quite willing to bear it.

Very busy were they both all the morning; and then the wife of the foreman came to have a bit of dinner with Mrs. Quaver, and

to dress at her house, for she was far too thrifty to sweep and dust, and set tables and chairs, in anything but her morning apparel. Mr. Quaver was up to dinner.

“Ah, sir,” said the polite visitor, “there’s half of the pleasure and more a-gone, to all of us as knows you, to think as you won’t be amongst us this evening.”

“It’s a heavy trial a-comed on me,” he said, coughing, “especially to think as it comed now, and all a-brought on by the Church like.”

How could the little tailor dare say so when he had brought his illness so decidedly on himself; but false accusations are common enough in the world.

“I’m sure, as your dear wife says, if it wasn’t as she considers it her duty, her never could have spirits to go this evening.”

“Dooty’s a great help, a wonderful help to

one on one's way ; her'll keep up, I knows, though it must be trying, for sure," he replied.

"And you'll take care of the children?" said Mrs. Quaver; "leastways not let Amanda Maria tumble into the fire, or drink hot water, or anything dreadful, as we reads of. I shall take Matilda Jane and Alfonso with me for the tea, and then send 'em home. It's time now we went up to dress," she said, addressing her friend; "not that dress is nothing to me, or the tea either, but I don't wish to disappoint my friends."

However she sacrificed herself at the shrine of friendship with a very good grace, and when their toilettes were completed, they sallied forth, to be ready at the vestry to receive the expected guests.

Very grand and portly they both looked, as they sailed together down the village street,

feeling that they were regarded as persons of some consequence, and attired befittingly in black silk dresses and wonderful bonnets.

About the same time Jack and Sally Martin made their appearance at Mrs. Brown's. They had contrived to save sixpence each, and were come to ask Jem to accompany them.

Jack had brushed his Sunday jacket, and smoothed and plastered down his hair, and, with a sprig of laurustinus in his button-hole, was as much pleased with his appearance as any dandy could have been.

Sally had been engaged all the morning in what she called "getting up her frock." It was rather a light one for the time of year, but looked all the gayer on that account; and she was not a little vain of herself, as she gazed in the cracked looking-glass, which was the best the cottage afforded, and saw

the reflection of a lovely bonnet, with as many red roses as could well be put into it, and which was now worn for the first time.

“We be come to ax if Jem would like to go wi’ us to the tea,” said Jack.

“Laws !” said Mrs. Brown, “I hardly acknowledged ’ee. I couldn’t think who the fine folks was as I seed coming ; how you have addressed yourselves up, times must be a sight better wi’ you than they be wi’ we !”

Sally simpered, and looked very much pleased at the compliment paid to their appearance.

“You’d better a-come, Jem,” said Jack.

Jem still looked very ill, and seeing the others so smart made him feel moré wretched.

“I don’t want to go,” he said.

“’Tis only sixpence,” said Sally ; “and we haven’t had no treat yet this winter, and mayhap a bit o’ cake would do ’ee good.

How Tom did wish he could ha' come, for sure !”

Mrs. Brown did not like to see them so much grander than her boy, and she also thought the cake might do him good, and that seeing folks might cheer him up a bit ; so she said—

“ You may so well go, Jem ; your clothes be all ready, and it won't take 'ee long to dress ; it'll make 'ee feel better, and I don't mind sixpence for once, to give 'ee a treat.

He was rather ashamed of his appearance, and thought he would shew he could dress as well as Jack, and he thought, too, it would look respectable to be at the meeting, especially with so smart a girl as Sally. So he went upstairs, and they offered good-naturedly to wait for him ; and in half an hour they were on their way, Sally taking an arm of each, to the vestry of the chapel.”

Many others were going the same way, and by the time they arrived it was full, and the steaming tea made it intensely hot. However, there was accommodation for all comers. Mrs. Quaver was conspicuous among the tea-makers, with her new teapot and showy tea-set, the strings of her bonnet untied on account of the heat, and thrown back to avoid injury from the tea.

They preferred having it in this way: each lady sitting before her own tray, and with a friend to assist her, making for a select party. Some people certainly made in kettles, and sent it round. It was perhaps less trouble, but then not near so sociable—it was so pleasant to have their own friends round them, it was just like a party of their own.

Mrs. Quaver's table was much sought that evening—it was always considered a select one; but besides that Mr. Quaver's friends now came to

inquire after him, and express their regret at his absence. The preacher from Chesterton honoured her with his presence.

“I am sorry, ma’am,” he said, “your respected husband will not be here this evening. I remember his music and his voice in the singing last year quite well, and I grieve at his absence.”

“I am extremely obligated to you, sir,” she replied with formal courtesy, but almost upsetting the cup of tea she was handing to him, in her anxiety to pay the preacher every respect, “and so will Mr. Quaver be too, much obligated and honoured at your inquiries. It have been a great vexation to him, and if you could have seen him take his instrument out of his bag this very morning, and look at it as one might look at a child, and then put it back, when he felt he couldn’t a-come, you would have said ’twas moloncholy, for sartain.”

There was quite a sensation round the little table as she gave this description, and many exclamations of "dear heart!" and "did he, sure!" and the like expressions of condolence.

The great man of the evening expressed his sorrow again in a fitting manner, and then went to take his second cup of tea at another table, asking permission to help himself to a slice of cake from a third as he passed, for he was too much accustomed to this sort of thing not to be aware that he must distribute his favours as generally as possible. Tea was prolonged as long as it could possibly be, and by the incessant chattering and laughing, it appeared to be a very enjoyable meal; and if sixpence each paid for the tea and cake, the arrangers of the feast must have been very good managers.

When it was all over, the tables that had

been placed in the chapel were removed, and the speaking commenced. A sort of platform had been raised over the desk, in front of the pulpit, so as to accommodate all the speakers. Many who had not been at the tea came to the service, and the chapel was filled to overflowing.

The speakers mounted the platform, and the service began. Could the curate have heard the addresses, he would have certainly agreed with Hamilton, that if their style was suited to the congregation who were collected, many of whom were church people, he most undoubtedly was often shooting over their heads.

Even words and phrases were used in a different sense from that which he would have given them, so much do old words, and different meanings to words in common use, from those applied to them by educated people,

still linger in country places. But had he been there that evening, he would have allowed that it certainly was light, and light with only a small portion of any peculiar colour that was then shed in the little brick chapel.

True, the dropped h's might have been picked up off that platform by bushels, but it would have been unnecessary trouble; they were property never missed by the speakers, and that would have been wholly valueless to any of the congregation. But what mattered the h's, what mattered the old-world expressions?—they were understood by all present, and the applause at the speeches was tremendous.

The tinker (preaching seems often to have been connected with that trade since the days of John Bunyan) was especially admired. He spoke a little on that world-honoured alle-

gory, talking in the simplest every-day language, though not ungarnished with marvellous flowers of speech—of the hill Difficulty, and the way to Zion, representing at one minute the wayfarer as a weary pilgrim, and then by a flight of imagination, which was received with great acclaim, described this same traveller as seated in the gospel chariot, going on safely over every danger.

It was a strange mixture of similes, but they all knew what he meant, and the descriptions were often wonderfully graphic. The speeches were interspersed with continual anecdotes, which were often especially addressed to “our young friends.” Then there was a prayer and a hymn, in which the gospel chariot was again named, and the preacher from Chesterton mounted the pulpit.

It was a really good sermon, though it was preached in a chapel; and lengthy as the

service had been, no one appeared to be tired, by the buzz of conversation as the people came out. There had been much more of entertaining and lively anecdotes and remarks than was the custom on the usual services, and those who attended would not have been satisfied had it been over too soon.

“It went off beautiful, dear Mrs. Quaver,” said her friend. “If only Mr. Quaver could ha’ been at it, and I missed his music dreadful. But it’s been a lovely service, and a beautiful sermon, if ever one was preached, and I heard all the folks a-praising of the cake. I’m tired out, but I don’t mind that, now that it’s over, and all so well!”

“And not a cup so much as cracked, that I saw,” replied Mrs. Quaver. “I packed mine safe up, and sent ’em home by Matilda Jane, and I know her’ll take care of ’em—her be proud of they cups.”

“And how did you like it, Jem?” asked Sally.

“Oh! tolerable,” said he; “’twas uncommon good cake, enough to make anyone better; but that there lodger of mother’s, he’ll make nonsense of it all—he makes nonsense of everything.”

“Tom will ask all about the sermon when we gets home,” said Jack; “I must try and mind it, summut of it, at least; and so must you, Sall.”

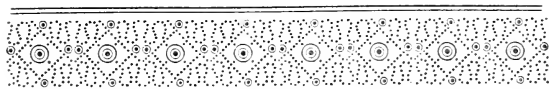
“I promised to tell he the text,” she said; “and I’ve been a-saying it over and over, till I’ve most forgot everything else.”

But she did remember the text; and Jack recollected something of one of the speeches. They talked of the tea all the next day, and told Tom all they could—he was so pleased, poor boy!—and told Miss Maude, and never thinking it could be wrong, Mr. Knightly,

too, who smiled, and said he was very glad they had been, and he hoped they would remember what they had heard.

Was he wrong in saying so? Was he inclined to latitudinarian principles? Many would say he was. But the words rung in his ears—"Any ray of light better than the darkness!"





CHAPTER VIII.

MARKET-DAY AT SADBOROUGH.

IT was Friday morning, market-day at Sadborough. From an early hour the place was astir; carts were coming in from the country, stalls putting up at the sides of the streets, and the usual bustle of market-day in a country town going on.

There was no market-house; the farmers' wives, and daughters, and the dairywomen sat on the pavement, with their baskets before them, the clean white cloths hiding from view the plump poultry, the fresh eggs, and pounds

of delicious-looking country butter. There were stalls of apples and oranges ; and heaps of potatoes and turnips were piled up at the sides of the street ; and there were carts, besides, going backwards and forwards with the produce of fields and gardens. The butchers were not behindhand ; the fine pieces of beef seemed to smile affectionately on the purchasers, who came in plenty to look after these good things.

There were cooks, and housekeepers, a few gentlemen at the butchers', and some ladies who liked doing their own marketing, and many of the shopkeepers' wives.

But there were many that day in the High Street of Sadborough who were not usually seen in that locality, or, at least, not at that time of day ; people on whom the good things did not seem to smile ; for whom the beef and mutton were not intended ; who had little

enough to do with fresh eggs and sweet butter. Dissolute, reckless-looking men ; miserable, wretched women, with tattered garments, and unkempt hair ; half-starved, half-naked children—the very refuse of the back lanes and courts.

There was evidently something wrong ; these people were not generally seen, certainly not in such numbers, as was the case now, making well-dressed ladies, and respectable, well-to-do shopkeepers' wives, feel uncomfortable at the unusual proximity. Many said they did not like the look of things ; there were so many ill-looking people about, they felt sure there would be some mischief. They knew there was some reason to expect it ; the impending election was looked forward to with anxiety by all parties ; farm work was underpaid, a great number of twine spinners were unemployed, and the unsettled state of

the country made these matters of more than usual consequence.

There had been work during the winter, as Messrs. Gain and Twine had had a large order for cordage and sail-cloth ; but this was now finished, and many were out of work ; and this morning it was expected that the goods would be on their way from the place where they had been laid up in the town, to the store at Sadport, to remain there until they could be put on board the *Lady Bertha*, as the new vessel was called, which was to convey them to their destination.

And this it was that brought so many of the lowest classes into sight that day ; they had nothing to do, not very much to eat, and were quite ready for any small amount of mischief that might come in their way.

The one-eyed man was there, joining first one group and then another ; not speaking a

great deal, or for a long time to any, but, apparently from the actions and words of the people after he left, speaking in a manner that made a great impression.

Jem Brown was there, very ragged. His mother, when he was younger, had kept him tolerably tidy, but he had got beyond her now ; and though he could dress himself up for an occasion, as a general rule he preferred rags. He was certainly not improving in any way.

Jack Martin was with him, quite as ragged, quite as idle as himself ; but for that he was not altogether to blame, as he had been employed by Farmer Stuart, and had been thrown out of work by the fire. He was a bright-looking boy, even in his rags ; somewhat, perhaps, too bold and fearless-looking, but a pleasant boy still.

As the day wore on, there were fewer

respectable people to be seen, and more of those who looked anything but respectable, and many of the market women, seeing there were so few customers, began to pack up their baskets, with the intention of returning home.

There were generally many travelling people at Sadborough on market-day, with brushes and mops, mats, tin articles, and like matters for sale. Towards the middle of the day, a girl, apparently about fifteen, might have been seen ; she had a long string of stay-laces over her arm, and carried a basket full of tin skewers, a bunch or two of which she took out at a time, holding them up, and crying out—

“ Any skewers, my lady, good skewers, only threepence a bunch ; laces, long laces, three for a penny ; skewers, threepence a bunch ! ” and so she ran on, following any

person she thought likely to buy, or perhaps to give her a penny.

She was a girl whom many would have given a second glance to, notwithstanding the rags and the dirt with which her dress was actually fringed at the bottom, as if she had walked a long way through dusty roads and muddy country lanes. She wore no bonnet, but had a shawl pinned over her head, hiding from view, with the exception of one or two stray tresses, a wealth of raven hair, which many a fine lady would have given a small fortune to possess. The shawl, that would have been such a trying head-dress to many, only served to set off the almost perfect oval of her face; and her eyes, of the deepest dark blue, were shaded by lashes that actually swept her cheek. She had a high-flushed colour, but it was rather that of over-fatigue and excitement than the hue of robust health, and it oc-

casionally faded quite away ; then if anyone spoke to her, she would flush up again, and her splendid eyes, looking up from under their heavy lashes, sparkled like gems. But she did not seem to be thinking at all of her appearance ; the little figure tripped in and out among the people, uncaring for anything, only intent on selling her skewers or her laces.

When she spoke, it was in a quick, hoarse voice that seemed strained with perpetually crying her wares, and probably from the effects of cold occasioned by exposure to the weather ; and every now and then a manner of lassitude came over her that almost seemed like affectation, but yet added another grace to the strange, picturesque child who cried her laces and skewers that day in the street of Sadborough.

Country farmers are not a sentimental race

by any means, nor farmers' wives those who would be at all inclined to approve either of the dress or occupation of the girl who has been described; but there was a peculiarly innocent look altogether in the exquisitely lovely face, and "beauty is beauty in every degree," so that it is not unlikely she sold her things far better than one of more unprepossessing appearance would have done.

Presently she held up a bunch of skewers higher than usual, with a peculiar manner of her hand, though not one that would have attracted the attention of a stranger, and then, speaking in a louder tone of voice than she had used before, a strong Irish accent was heard mingling with the west-country dialect. The one-eyed man was then engaged in purchasing a cabbage, but noticed the action and the voice, and after he had concluded his bargain, came up to her.

“Why, where have you been all this time?” he said; “you ought to have been here a week ago!”

“I’ve been ill, feyther,” she said, “rale bad. I a’most thought I’d have died by the way.”

“Not much loss, that I can see, if you had, leaving me here all alone, with no message from my friends or any one.”

He spoke the last words softly, and looked at her for an answer. She gave an expressive nod, and at the same time held up a bunch of skewers to a market-woman, and was, in a minute, intently engaged in driving a bargain. But father and daughter did not lose sight of one another again, though she continued at her business, and he walked about, apparently doing nothing.

Jem Brown had seen the conversation, and said to his friend Jack,

“That be our lodger’s girl, I reckon; he was expecting she to-day. My! ain’t she a queer one; whatever ’ll mother say to her looks?”

Jack looked towards her. Perhaps he had a keener eye for beauty than his friend; he was very much struck with her appearance, and was going up to look nearer at her, when the first of Gain and Twine’s waggons came in sight. It was received with a groan, deep, not loud; the Sadborough people were not used to rioting, and no one seemed to wish to take the initiative. However, in some way there was a small rush made on this waggon; but the foremost man, not seeing the girl, threw her down before she was aware she was in any danger, and the others pressing on him from behind, it was with difficulty she was pulled up before the horses trampled on her.

The men were not quite ready for rioting, and this little occurrence diverted their thoughts for the time. The poor child's skewers were all in the road, and most of her laces dirtied, and the rough men who had done the mischief now stood laughing at her distress. Her shawl had fallen off, the long black tresses came unfastened, and fell in masses around her slender figure. She was so tired and weary she could scarcely keep from crying, and the pallor that had overspread her face at first was succeeded, when she saw how she was mocked at and treated, by a brighter colour than she had before, and her eyes sparkled with indignation, though the lashes were wet with tears.

Jack Martin, who had been too shy to speak to her before the accident, now came up to her. He had been looking on astonished ; he picked up her laces and skewers.

“I hopes you wasn’t hurted,” he said; “you was most runned over; you’d better come down to mother’s, and stop and rest a bit.”

“Not now, thankee,” she said; “I can’t leave feyther.”

She saw her father watching her, but he had not attempted to assist her, or even to rescue her when she was lying under the horses’ feet. She soon recovered her composure, and, twisting her slender fingers in the long black coils, twined them up again in heavy masses round her head; but the fright or the exertion seemed almost too much for her, and her colour flushed up, and then faded away repeatedly while she was doing it.

Jack thought he had never seen any one like her in his life before, and as the sun shone out and fell on a coil of her hair as it

hung round her arm, he said to himself—"It's that there black that's most blue, like the rar-ven as I once had."

He gave her the shawl, and she pinned it on as before, and, taking the laces and skewers, thanked him for picking them up.

"Where do you live?" she asked; "I should like to come and see'ee to thank'ee, only I can't stop now."

Jack told her, and then, as another waggon passed, the people began to press again, and they separated, the girl going to stand by her father.

"You be good sort of people here, I think," said he, "to take things so easy, to see other folks a-making money out of you, and then leaving of you to starve, or get on just as you can. I knows they as wouldn't put up with such things."

"We've a-got to put up wi' it, though,"

said a lazy ragged man with a short pipe in his mouth ; “ we must bear wi’ it.”

“ Because you like to, there is no other cause ; men don’t do so in they parts as I come from.”

“ Ah, they be the men for husbands, they be,” said a disreputable looking woman, who had none of her own, though she held a ragged baby in her arms ; “ we’ve a-got none such here.”

“ You’ve a-got a bit o’ sperrit, missus, I see ; you wouldn’t a-mind flying on one of they waggons, if there was only men to show you the way.”

“ They bean’t men, they don’t a-desarve the name !” screamed another woman ; “ they thinks only of theyselves, and leaves we and the children to starve.”

It was not undeserved reproach, though not in the way she intended it.

“What do’ee want us to do?” said the man with the pipe, holding it in his hand while he was speaking, but making his speech short, that it might not go out; “just go and get ourselves into trouble for nought; there’ll be work agen arter a bit, if you’ll only be peaceable.”

“It’ll come time enough for you, if never’s the day,” retorted the woman contemptuously, “you as lets your missus work hard at the washing all the week, and scarce puts your hand to a stroke o’ nothing ’cept lighting that ’ere pipe.”

The accusation was too true a one to be denied; but smokers are generally stoical, at least while the pipe is alight, so he did not reply.

“It must have taken long work to make all that sail-cloth, and all those ropes and nets,” said the one-eyed man, as another

waggon rolled by. One or two other men had come up by this time, or he would probably not have continued his conversation to the hopeless individual with the pipe.

“Hard work! I should think so, and paid bad enough,” said one of these, “and now it be all going away, and Gain and Twine will have the money, and buy more houses, and get more votes, for they as will go agin the people and their rights. Let’s give that ’ere waggon a bit o’ a cheer, boys, just to help ’em on, and give ’em good luck as they goes.”

A deep heavy groan arose from the group, and was caught up and echoed on all down the street. There was a sort of move among the people; they only wanted a leader at that moment to have made them spring like tigers upon the waggons, and tear the work to pieces, on which they had themselves been

employed only a week or two since. But there was no one to lead; the one-eyed man had no intention of getting himself into trouble; it was his vocation to lead others into it, and then leave them to get out of it as best they could by themselves.

The waggons went on, proceeding to Sadport; a few more groans, and not a few muttered execrations were sent after them, and that was all for the present. The day wore on; the women dragged home one after another with the tired children; the men fell off, some going into the public houses to talk over the matter, and a few going home to sleep by the fire. The market-women were all gone, the market-carts rattling over the street on their homeward way; the butchers' stalls were taking down, and business was over for the day. The evening drew on, the oil-lamps were lighted in the

streets, and the girl with the laces joined her father, that he might take her to the place where he lodged. She had sold most of her goods, and packed the rest into her basket as she walked along by his side.

“Well, what’s the answer?” asked he, as soon as they were in a place sufficiently lonely for him to commence the conversation. He had taken her the road round by the convent for the purpose.

She took out of her bosom a dirty piece of paper, folded clumsily like a note, and gave it to him.

“I can’t see it here,” he said; “what’s in it?—you know.”

“He will be here this night, he said, and you must be looking out for him the morn, and see there’s a room where he can spake; but it’s wrote down, more about it than I know.”

“And so of your stopping, and not a-coming on as you might, I’ve nigh lost my chance of getting things all right; how be I to get a room in that time, I wonders? Step out quick, do, that I may go back and look arter it.”

“I be so tired, feyther, I can’t,” said she. “I’ve been rale bad, though you don’t belave it; I be in a shake all over now.”

“Nonsense—make haste, you can have some tea when you gets in.”

She went on as quickly as she could, but she was evidently very weak, and even her basket seemed a weight to her, but he never offered to take it; he walked on with a quick step, that at times almost obliged her to run. She had to keep up with him as well as she could.

They soon reached Widow Brown’s. She was expecting her lodger’s daughter, but was

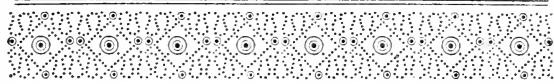
certainly by no means pleased with her appearance ; however, she thought she must make the best of it, she could not afford to lose a lodger who paid regularly, and whom her brother wished her to keep.

The girl had bought her own provisions in the town, and Mrs. Brown made the tea for her, and cut her some bread and butter, and, seeing how weary she was, pressed her to eat and drink ; and the poor child was only too glad to get it, and to sit down by the warmth of the fire.

Jem was sulky ; he did not speak to her at all. She soon fell asleep, and then Mrs. Brown woke her, and said she had better go up to bed. It was no great amount of kindness that was shewn her, but she was thankful to have reached her destination after her illness, and the wandering life she had led for the last few weeks. Her father returned

to the town to prepare the room, and endeavour to collect an audience for the orator who was expected to speak on the morrow.





CHAPTER IX.

SATURDAY AT NANNY MARTIN'S.

THE next morning Sally Martin was standing in the window of the cottage, putting up her somewhat carroty tresses, which were generally in a state of towse and tumble, by the aid of the little cracked looking-glass, when she became aware that Jack was looking on at the proceeding.

“Why do’ee put up your hair that fashion, Sall?” he said; “I’ve a-seen some as do it real different.”

“How do ’em do it different?” she inquired, turning sharply on him; “and what do you know of doing up girls’ hair?”

“Oh! it don’t matter to me about yourn,” he replied, with brotherly indifference; “’twas different hair, I s’pose; ’twern’t put up high like that, but twisted up like a great coil of rope, and most so big, I reckon yourn wouldn’t do it.”

She gave her head a toss, and turning to her glass, finished what she called a coronet, which she considered she had managed very cleverly, and felt sure was more in the fashion than any other style; but satisfied as she was with herself, she yet wondered not a little who it was Jack had seen, and what sort of hair it could be that had struck his fancy so much. When she had finished her hair, she sat down to mend some of the children’s things, ready for the next day.

Jack, with no further observation respecting her hair, went out.

The little daughter of the one-eyed man, somewhat recovered from the fatigue of her journey, and refreshed by her night's rest, was again early in the town with her laces and skewers. She did not expect to sell many, but she had spent the greater part of her life out of doors, and even when she was tired, could not bear to remain at home.

When she came into Sadborough, she saw at a glance how empty the High Street was looking, and therefore quickly turned out of it, and went rambling about, finding her way in and out of the back lanes, as more likely to afford her customers. She presently met Jack Martin.

“The top o’ the morning to you,” said she; “there ain’t much going on here to-day

—it be a terrible dull place this 'ere SADBorough."

Jack had never seen any place larger; her knowledge of the world seemed something wonderful to him.

"It's duller to-day than it were yesterday, in course," he replied; "'t isn't market-day always."

"Where do you live? I don't mind going in now, if you was to ax me," she said; "I gets tired so soon now."

Jack was rather shy of repeating his invitation of the previous day; he thought his mother would certainly consider her very queer-looking; but thus addressed, he could not refuse her request. Besides, they had always known WIDOW BROWN when she lived in SUN COURT, so he thought there could be no objection to her lodger.

He pointed out the way, and sauntered

home himself after a little while. She did not appear at all offended or discomposed at this treatment ; she was not accustomed to receive much politeness, and had no feeling of shyness to stand in her way of going alone—she had been too much about among different people for that sort of thing. She easily found her way, and entered, introducing herself. She sat down by Tom, and began talking to him.

“ I be so thirsty and tired,” she exclaimed.

“ Oh ! do take one of my oranges !” he said ; “ Miss Maude brought them to me.”

Tom was like many other people, he thought everyone knew his own friends. She did not know who Miss Maude was, but she understood he was ill, and that the oranges had been given to him ; she would not therefore take one.

Nanny was busy in the back kitchen, but called out—

“There be the teapot down by the fire, have a cup o’ tay ; and Sally, do cut the maid a bit o’ bread.”

The girl took it thankfully. Nanny had given it out of the kindness of her own motherly heart ; whatever her own children might want, they had her to take care of them as well as she could when they were ill. She never looked or thought of receiving any reward from the motherless girl, yet many weeks would not have passed away ere this small charity would be repaid her back a thousand times in blessing.

Jack had come in and loitered about a little, but he soon went out again ; he was certainly attracted by her appearance, but he found it dull work staying in with any girl. She sat down, and soon got quite chatty with Tom. It was very warm by the fire, and she took off her shawl. Sally looked at her,

and was very much struck by the braids of her hair.

“So it were her, was it!” she thought, “who Jack had a-seen. Well, she were a queer girl, and she’d hair enough to make a fine coronet; but ’twere a queer way of doing it up, and not at all in the fashion.”

Sally considered she should not like hers done in such an outlandish way; but then, perhaps, the poor maid had always lived where no one knew better—and how odd to wear a shawl as she did! Sally wondered whether she had a bonnet for Sundays, and whether the bonnet had red roses in it like hers!

Her work went on slowly during her cogitations, but as soon as she came to the satisfactory conclusion that the maid was quite out of the fashion, she resumed her previous occupation.

Nanny heard Tom laughing and talking, and was quite glad he was amused.

“And where do you come from?” he inquired.

“Oh ! I’ve been up the country, and down the country ; I be always about somewhere. I couldn’t stop at home, I was never a-used to it ; but then,” she continued, rather sadly, “I ain’t got no home likes as you have.”

“Haven’t you got any mother?” asked Tom.

“No, mother be dead ; her didn’t belong to these parts, her were Irish ; her’s been dead more than three year.”

And the girl crossed herself. Tom was silent a moment, for his companion was evidently affected. Then he said—

“I wish you’d get a home comfortable-like near we.”

“Yes, one like yours, that would be rale

nice ; but 'tain't no use wishing. I goes about wi' the skewers and the laces, and sees lots of people, and stops where I can."

"Are the folks kind to you?" inquired he.

"Some is, and some isn't. Your brother Jack, now, he was rale kind to I yesterday. I was most a-runned over by they waggons, and nobody cared for me, they all laughed but he, and he picked up my things."

"He told of it here," said Tom ; "'twas a shame to throw you down—I hope you wasn't hurt?"

"Oh ! no, I'se used to it ; but Jack were very kind, 'tain't many as cares to be kind to I. I shouldn't a-felled, if I'd been strong, but I was ill last week, and I don't sim well yet."

"You don't look well," replied the boy.
"I'se been ill a long time. I don't think as I

shall live much longer, but I don't mind for that ; I know I shall go to Heaven. If you were to die, poor maid, would you go there too ?”

“ Oh ! yes ! for sure and sartain !” she replied quickly ; “ the holy blessed Virgin will take me up to Heaven in her arms. Ain't I her own name child as was born on her day, and don't I cross myself whenever I speak her name ? ”

And she did so as she spoke. This was quite new to Tom ; he should ask Mr. Knightly or Miss Maude about it when next he saw either of them. But he thought it so sad she should have no mother, and no home. It was better for her to go soon to Heaven than even for him, though he sometimes suffered a good deal ; he was very much pleased with his new acquaintance.

“ I must go now,” she said, after a while.

“ You’ll come down again soon—and what do you say is your name ? ”

“ Mary—or you may call me Molly, if you like. Good-bye, Tom, good-bye, Mrs. Martin, and thank ’ee kindly ! ”

And they heard her all down the street crying her laces.

“ Her’s been a real pleasure to you, Tom,” said his mother.

“ Her’s a nice maid,” said he, “ though her be different to other folks.”

“ I should think her was different,” said Sally, with a toss of her head, for she had not quite forgiven Jack’s preference for her hair ; “ I wouldn’t dress like her for summut. It’s downright dowdy, and out of the fashion ! ”

At the corner of the street the girl met Jack.

“ Why do ’ee stand about doing of nothing, Jack ? ” she inquired.

“There bean’t nothing to do since the fire. How can one drash when there be no corn to drashy, and no barn to drash in?” he said, feeling that this was an unanswerable argument.

“But I wouldn’t stand doe’ nothing, if I was you,” she replied.

“I be going down to Sadport to see the ships ; maybe I’ll go to sea soon.”

“If I were you I’d take down some oranges to sell to the sailors. I shall, if I stops here long—there’s very little trade for the laces.”

Jack was very good at farm work, ploughing, or planting potatoes, but he had no idea of striking out for himself in a new line, and this would have been hardly suited to him ; and Mary certainly did not take into consideration that an awkward boy was not so likely to have customers as a girl like herself.

They parted—he presently strolled down to the port, and she went on through the High Street. There she met Maude Wilmot, and was wonderfully struck with her appearance, the golden hair and bright complexion seemed so beautiful to the Irish child. She did not think her a likely purchaser, but she ran after her, closely following her for some distance, that she might have a good view of her, and Maude, attracted by the pretty little figure, gave her a trifle.

“The blessed saints give it ye back agen, pretty lady!” said she, and turned, taking the road to Sadbroke.

When she was again with Mrs. Brown, she ran on in her quick way of talking of the lady she had met. The widow did not know what to make of her, she chattered so incessantly, and was by no means so respectable-looking as she could have wished ; but again

she thought she could not offend her brother, and they had lived much better since the one-eyed man had been her lodger; so she fell back on her favourite axiom, that poor people mustn't be particular, and bore with Mary, in the hope that living with decent people would improve her.

“Such a pretty lady, Mrs. Brown!” said the girl; “with long curls, all just like gold. My hair never would curl; I’m obliged to braid it up, and then it’s always coming down. She was just like a beautiful picture I once saw of St. Catherine, with the bright eyes and the gold curls. I wonder whether she’s called Catherine?—I never saw such a pretty lady.”

As she spoke, a knock was heard at the door; she went immediately to open it, and dropped a curtsy as she saw a gentleman.

“Good morning, Mrs. Brown,” said James

Knightly, coming in ; “ how’s Jem ?—I came to inquire after him.”

“ He’s better, thank’ee, sir ; he’s out somewhere—boys never will stop at home.”

“ I wish you could induce him to come to school ; and I don’t see him at church now. I’m afraid he’s not doing well.”

“ He’s never doing well, and he never won’t do well,” replied she, half angry at the remark ; “ he’ve a-plagued me all his life—I wishes he was dead, most often. I’s a-got to work, and he never won’t a-do nothing !”

She, doubtless, did not mean altogether what she said ; and the boy, in all probability, was very troublesome ; still, it was very dreadful to hear her talk in such a manner.

He turned to the girl ; her shawl was off, and her hair, twisted in thick, heavy braids round her head, was just then tolerably tidy ; she had put on a clean frock in the morning,

in place of that which had been so dirtied and frayed on her journey ; and Mrs. Brown was more satisfied with her appearance than she had yet been.

“ My lodger’s daughter,” she said to the clergyman.

“ Where do you come from?—are you going to remain here ?” he asked.

“ Oh ! I’ve been a-travelling about, please your rivirence,” she replied ; “ and I don’t know when I may be going again. I goes about wi’ the laces and skewers, and maybe a few oranges upon times.”

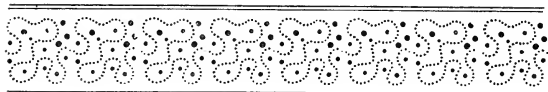
“ What is your name ?” he inquired.

“ Mary, after the Holy Blessed Virgin, your rivirence,” and she crossed herself as she spoke.

He turned away ; she was not going to remain—she was not one of his flock—it was quite impossible he could do her any good ;

but he wished she had not come into the village. He wondered where Widow Brown could have picked up such strange lodgers ; and after renewing his request that she would endeavour to induce her son to return to school, that he might not lose so much time, the curate went out of the cottage.





CHAPTER X.

AN EVENING AT THE “WOLF’S ARMS.”

ANY person passing that evening about seven o’clock in the direction of the “Wolf’s Arms,” a public-house situated at the corner of Lady’s Lane, would have seen a number of men going in at the door. There was to be a meeting held in the long, low room belonging to this place, which, according to a notice given out, would be held for the purpose of listening to an address to working men, as to their rights, and the

proper way in which they might benefit themselves.

There was a good deal of uncomfortable feeling abroad in the country at the time of which this story treats. The period had come, as it must come, when advancing years and the requirements of an increasing community necessitated some change being made in the existing laws.

Amongst the higher classes generally, the Reform Bill was looked upon as a something that would do away with all law, as the precursor of anarchy and confusion, of a reign of misrule and riot, of every evil that could come upon a nation.

The lowest and the worst of the people, those who had everything to gain by change, and nothing under any circumstances to lose, meant, if possible, to make it so. The cry for "the Bill, the Bill, the whole Bill, and no-

thing else," was everywhere to be heard, and in no mouths more frequently than in those of people who knew little enough what they were talking of. These classes intended it, as far as it was in their power, to be indeed the time the others feared—a time of destruction of property, of ruin to those who had any, of turbulence and rioting, of drunkenness and revelry, of wrong and robbery, when all order should be put down, and disorder should reign everywhere, and amid everything.

But these were the two extreme parties ; there were others. The bulk of the people, whatever were their political opinions, neither wished any injustice on the one hand, nor any great change on the other ; they could see wrong and endeavour to right it, see poverty and attempt to ameliorate it.

There were enlightened statesmen, ready to pilot the good ship in her hour of need ;

and she sailed on calmly, as she has ever done. And so it came to pass that, even at that time of divided opinions, England passed through the change with scarcely any difficulty. The disaffected spirits, overpowered, were soon obliged to return to whatever business they might have, and give up their trade of attempting to stir up mischief, and all went on as quietly as before.

The long, narrow, low, whitewashed room at the "Wolf's Arms" was filling fast; most of the men had pipes in their mouths—with the greater number it was the short pipe of the accustomed smoker; but there were a few sailors with their long clays; jugs of beer were passing round from hand to hand; and the conversation, such as it was, turned on their rights or their wrongs—what they had, and what they considered they ought to have. They were a rough set collected together,

though the greater number were quiet-looking men; but there were many others of a different stamp—idle mechanics, lazy twine-spinners, drinking day-labourers, and such like.

Mrs. Brown's lodger was amongst them, but not as if he had anything to do with the matter more than other listeners, although it was he who had arranged the whole affair, and given notice of the meeting.

After awhile the speaker arrived; a passage was made for him, with difficulty through the throng, and he passed on to the top of the room, where some preparation had been made for his reception. There was a chair for him to stand on, and a table in front to keep off the pressure of the crowd; and a jug of beer had been provided for his refreshment.

He was a short, stout, thick-set man, with a broad, full face; but there was a look of humour in his eye that, together with a width

of forehead and firmness of mouth, spoke of some amount of capability. He was evidently accustomed to speak, and had that ready flow of words, and quick appreciation of what was passing, with talent to turn it to account, that makes the small orator. He began in rather a low, insinuating voice, but he raised it gradually as he went on, suiting his tones carefully to the size of the room, and varying them to suit his different words.

“My friends, fellow-countrymen, fellow-workmen, I am one of yourselves (a slight cheer, led by the one-eyed man), one who knows your troubles (“Hear, hear,” from the same voice), one who can enter into your feelings, one who desires your advantage! I come asking your patience to listen to a few words (“Ay! ay!” from many; “Make’em short,” from one), and thanking you sincerely for your attendance. I pray you to give me

your attention, a plain man, like one of you. I was walking through your town this morning ("Was ye?"), I saw the nice-looking shops; I saw the gentlemen's houses ("Did ye?"); I saw the handsome-looking Town Hall, and I thought what a nice town SADBROUGH was ("Glad ye likes it!"); and now I come down here, I see your back streets; I see your lanes and alleys; I see the dark courts in which you live ("And what do'ee think of 'em?"); I see the houses of the poor; I see the want of the people, and I forget all I saw in the morning (cheers). I remember I am one of you, I glory in the thought that I am (continued cheering); and, believe me, at this moment—at this very moment, in this room—this poor low room, I feel prouder of speaking, prouder of standing here before you, prouder of the honour you have done me in coming, than if I were standing in the

Town Hall, before the mayor and the magistrates, and the first people of Sadborough !”

Tremendous cheering and stamping of feet, which made the room rock and reel. As soon as it was over he commenced again.

“ Yes, it is an honour you have done me in coming, you of the people ! But why are you in these back streets ?—(“ Ay ! that’s the question !”)—why are you living in these wretched houses ?—why have you only ragged garments ?—why have you no comforts ? (“ Cause we’s poor, I s’pose,” from Job Martin). Certainly because you are poor, but why are you poor ?—are not you the men who do the work ?—are not yours the arms that till the ground ?—and why, then, do you not eat of the fruit of it ? Are not yours the hands that make the money of the rich ?—and when they send off their stores, and get their wealth back in return, why is it that

you receive none for your labour? Why! because they are represented in Parliament, and you are not; because they have the power all in their own hands; because the rich make the laws, and the poor have to keep them (“’Tisn’t fair, no, ’tisn’t,” from many voices).

“And why are you not represented?—why have you not your own members in Parliament?—why have you not true men there, who will stand for your rights?—you, the strength of the nation; the sinews of the country; the very pith and fibres—if I may so speak—of the Old Oak of England (loud cheers). Why are you not represented? I ask again, why?—(“Tell us, make haste! we wants to know”).

“Why? then I will tell you: because the rich are afraid of you; because they know what is the power of the people; because

they know what is the strength of the people ! They are afraid of that strength ; they are afraid of that power, and so they tie you, and they bind you, and they keep you bound and tied. But it is your own fault. Why do you wear the bonds ?—why do you not cast them from you ? You can break them, as easily as Samson his green withes ; the power is in your own arms, the strength is in your own hands ; it rests with yourselves, and with yourselves alone, whether you will be a free people, or whether you will not. (Loud applause, and cries of “ We will ! we will ! ”) Is not one man as good as another ?” (Loud cheering. “ And a great deal better too,” from a voice, at which anti-climax the speaker looked grave, and the few who understood it laughed).

He continued in a lower tone :

“ But I don’t wish you to be free (“ What-

ever do'ee want, then ?") ; I don't desire you should be free (Groans and hisses) ; I do not think you deserve to be free (continued hisses and tumult). But why is it that I do not wish it ? Because you do not seek it for yourselves ; because you won't raise an arm for your own help ; because you like work best ; because you like want best ; because you are only fit to be worked, and to be put upon. ("Gain puts upon us"). I ask no names ; I wish to hear none. I am no man's enemy, I wish to be the friend of all ; but I am one of the people, and therefore I stand up for the people ; I desire to help the oppressed ; I am for universal brotherhood ; everyone's friend, no person's enemy. What I desire is, to see all placed on a platform, all standing on a level, and then to start fair. (Immense clapping, and stamping, and cheering, cries of "That's it ! that's

what we want!" and one voice, "Then why be 'ee up on that chair, ye'd much better come down, we be as good as you." Cries of "Turn him out! turn him out!" and continued cheering and uproar).

"Let him stay," said the orator, blandly. "Of course you're as good as I am. Is it not the very thing I am come here to tell you this evening? Of course you are as good as the farmers who grind you down; of course you are as good as the masters who pay you so miserably; of course you are as good as the voters who will return their own member; of course you are as good as the gentlefolks who live in the great houses; but they stand up for their interest, and you neglect yours; they look after their rights, and you don't care for yours; you like your wrongs best, and if you do you may keep them. ("We don't like 'em, we won't

keep 'em ; what do 'ee want us to do ? ”)

“ Not work for any that will not support the Bill ; not do a stroke for those who vote the wrong way ! What is bearing a little now, for the sake of yourselves and of your children ? But it need not be for long—it need not be at all ; there’s plenty of food in the land, and it’s yours by right, for you have worked for it—it is not for me to tell you how you may get it ! I should be disgracing myself, I should be disgracing you, if I were to say to free-born Englishmen how they are to live. You’ll soon find the way—you’ll soon have enough and to spare ; I have no fear for you, and I will only say one word more : don’t do anything alone—not just one, or just two, or just three, but whatever you do, whatever you may consider it right to do, let it be done shoulder to shoulder—a long pull, and a strong pull, and a pull altogether ! ”

He sat down. The cheers, the stamping of feet, and clapping of hands resounded through the house, through the lane, through the street; the room shook, pieces of plaster fell from the ceiling, the landlord trembled for the safety of his house, as the sound rose and fell, and rose again, till they were fain to leave off for very weariness and exhaustion.

A few of the men endeavoured to speak, but they were not used to it, and soon left off. The room began rapidly to thin; some handbills were given away as the men passed out, with the heading, in large letters, "Union is Strength!" There were other large letters interspersed among the smaller type of the bills, these being, "Vote by Ballot," "Universal Suffrage," &c.; and the purport of the whole was to inform those who received them, that they were quite fit to govern the nation, that the nation expected

it of them, and that they must set to their task immediately. But as only a few to whom they were given could read, the valuable documents were in most cases used to light pipes before the evening was over. The meeting broke up, on the whole, very quietly, and one by one the men returned to their houses.

The landlord of the "Wolf's Arms" had sold more beer than usual, and would probably do so for some time, as the men would come there again to talk the matter over.

An indifferent spectator would have said no harm had been done; they would have more sense than to be guided by a man like that. But was ever seed sown either of good or ill, whereof not even one grain did take root, and spring forth, and bud? Probably never. There was fruit, fruit of sin and fruit of sorrow, brought forth in Sadborough from the words that evening spoken.

Jem Brown had been there, with his friend Jack Martin ; they stood outside in the narrow passage, just looking in at the door, peeping between the men's heads, at the wonderful speaker, with eyes, and ears, and mouths, too, wide open, drinking in, as it were, every word. Jem was determined to leave SADBorough, and try his fortune somewhere else ; " but now," he said, " as there was likely to be something going on, he should stay a little longer, and see what was up, and help they as was going to 'sert the rights of the poor."

The next day, as Mr. Gain was driving his family in to church, as they went along the lane which led from Woody Knoll into the high road, at a pretty fast trot, he suddenly pulled up, and the spirited horse in the open carriage began to plunge at being so suddenly stopped, to the terror of Mrs. Gain, who could not think what was the matter. Mr. Gain

got out, and after quieting the animal, gave her the reins, and then proceeded to cut and unfasten a piece of strong string that had been tied from a tree in the hedge to one on the opposite side, right across the road. Had he not seen it, as he fortunately did, in time to draw up, and had the horse become entangled in it, there would probably have been an accident.

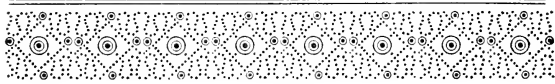
As no other carriage would have been likely that morning to have been coming down the lane, and as it was well known his would be doing so, Mr. Gain felt sure the little attention was intended for himself ; and this, with his previous anxiety, occupied his thoughts during a good part of the service.

As they came out he saw Mr. Knightly, and told him of the occurrence, and was informed in return of the meeting at the “ Wolf’s Arms,” and also that a fire had broken out

during the evening in a house in a back street, which, being an empty one, there was little doubt that it was the work of an incendiary.

Mr. Knightly said several special constables had been sworn in on Saturday, and he hoped there would be no further mischief; but the town was in a most unsettled state, and it was only right to be prepared.





CHAPTER XI.

JACK MARTIN ENCOUNTERS THE DOCTOR'S BOY.

THERE was a meeting again on Sunday evening at the "Wolf's Arms," but not such a crowded one. The speech was much the same as the previous one, though, perhaps, the remarks, being addressed to a more select audience, were somewhat more pointed and personal than had been the case on Saturday. Still, even this was taken so quietly, that the orator was almost afraid his eloquence would be thrown away on the people at Sadborough; they were not, he said, sufficiently enlightened

to care for their freedom, so he made his remarks stronger, and endeavoured to stir them up a little more.

In the course of the night two fires took place at different parts of the town, but the engines were ready, and everyone was now on the alert, so they were happily soon extinguished, though one or two cottages were burnt to the ground.

The morning rose fair and frosty, with that peculiar stillness in the air that is generally the case in such weather, and there was a stillness in the place that seemed akin to it. An unusual quiet pervaded the streets of SADBorough, as Mr. Knightly, at a much earlier hour than was his usual custom, traversed them on his way to the rectory. Yet he was not deceived by this appearance, he would rather have seen the people about as they were on the market day, though that spoke of

disturbance ; but the quiet on this day was too great.

He had to pass by some unfinished houses on his way ; the work had been stopped, partly by the frost, yet that was now not so severe but that much might have been gone on with, but there was nothing doing ; no masons' trowels were clicking against the stones, no carpenters were sawing the planks, the ladders were standing idle against the walls, the scaffolding was empty of all workmen. The place was altogether like a deserted town, and much grieved was Mr. Knightly to see it was so.

He arrived at the rectory before breakfast was over, and was shown into the study, where he was soon joined by Mr. Saxon. He informed the rector of the two fires of the night before, of the information he had received respecting the meetings at the " Wolf's

Arms," and of the state in which the town appeared that morning. Mr. Saxon listened with due appearance of attention, but he was not one to take alarm in a moment, and he replied cautiously—

"I think, Mr. Knightly, there has been just a little effervescence of ill feeling; but I have no doubt it will subside very shortly, and Sadbrough will relapse into its usual peaceable state."

"But the fires, Mr. Saxon!" was the reply; "the matter is, I am sure, becoming very serious. I much doubt whether we shall pass through the day without some riot."

"Do you really think so, Mr. Knightly?" replied the rector; "well, myself I scarcely share your apprehensions; the people have undoubtedly been giving way to ill-feeling, which, as Christian men, we must of course greatly deplore; but they have been worked

up by interested individuals. I trust that influence will not have more than a slight temporary power; and after a little bluster, I feel quite sure they will quiet down again."

Such work as those incendiary fires in the middle of the night, was something different from a little bluster; but Mr. Knightly did not contradict the rector, he only said he thought it right they should be prepared to meet the worst, and that he had called to inquire whether Mr. Saxon would go with him to see the mayor, and call on some other gentlemen of the town, to make arrangements for meeting any outbreak, and to discuss the propriety of having the streets patrolled by some of the gentlemen and tradesmen who were willing to undertake it, that they might not all be burned in their beds.

"Certainly, I will accompany you, Mr. Knightly, if you think it right," was the

reply ; “ is your son at home ?—what does he think of it ? ”

“ He went yesterday afternoon to take a friend’s duty, a few miles off, but I expect him home some time this afternoon.”

Mr. Saxon took his hat, and the two gentlemen proceeded to the house of the mayor. He was in a great state of excitement, very thankful indeed to see the rector and magistrate. When he had been elected to his office, he told his friends he was very proud of the high honour they had done him in choosing him as their mayor, but he never thought any difficulty would have come in his way ; and now that there was business to be done, and that he found his lot had fallen in troublous times, he would have been very thankful if they would have taken the honour back again.

He had heard of the fires ; he had heard of

the attack, as he called it, that had been made on that excellent gentleman who had preceded him in office, Mr. Gain ; he had heard of the meetings at the “ Wolf’s Arms ;” he had heard very few of the labourers, or work-people of any kind, had returned to work that morning. Everyone who told him any news, exaggerated it as much as possible—his own fears exaggerated it with tenfold magnifying power.

“ What ought they to do ?” he inquired—“ shut up the shops, barricade the houses, collect together all the constables, send to Chesterton for the military ?” He put himself entirely into their hands—he would do anything they thought right, or nothing, if that would be the better course. He had been going away for a few weeks ; his wife had been ill, and wanted change, but he supposed it would not be right for him to go now, at such

a time of danger—he ought, he felt, to be at his post; he would remain, of course, though at a great inconvenience to himself. And again he appealed to Mr. Knightly as to what he should do.

The advice was very simple—they had better call on the gentlemen, tradesmen, and respectable inhabitants, have a sufficient number sworn in as special constables, so that the town might be patrolled at night, till the alarm had quieted; and also offer another reward for the discovery of the perpetrators of the incendiary fires. Mr. Knightly added, he earnestly hoped there would be no need to send for the military; he certainly did not anticipate the necessity of their having to resort to such extreme measures.

“Nothing would grieve me more,” said the rector. “I hope at least we can hold our own, without requiring the aid of those

who ought only to be needed against a foreign foe ; and our people are a quiet set."

They decided on calling first on Mr. Mills, in hopes of finding him at home. The mayor went with them—he felt safer ; he did not much like walking through the streets. Of course his office made him a marked man ; he might have a stone thrown at him, the stone might break his arm, or even kill him at once ; he might be shot at from behind a wall ; but then, if he stayed at home, the house might be attacked, or he might be applied to for advice. The possibilities that rose up before his mind were numerous, but he decided that it was better going out with others, to remaining at home by himself.

Mr. Mills's door was opened to them by a boy in buttons.

"Is Mr. Mills at home?" was the inquiry.

“He have gone to see a patient in the country, sir,” said the boy.

“When will he return?—do you know?”

“’Tis uncertain, sir—quite uncertain.”

The boy had to stand up for his master’s dignity. If he knew certainly when he would return home, he could not have that extensive practice which made the doctor’s a sufficiently grand place for such a servant as himself to remain in.

“When Mr. Mills returns, will you ask him to remain in, if he can do so, for half an hour or an hour—we wish to see him particularly,” said Mr. Knightly, with authority.

“I’ll tell him, sir, immediate he comes in,” said the boy, shutting the door very grandly after them.

They went to some other houses, and found the inhabitants of the town very glad to hear that any precautionary measures were going

to be taken. There was evidently a general feeling of distrust.

On returning through the High Street, they met Mr. Gain. He was on his way to his counting-house; he had heard that there was no work doing that morning. Mr. Twine had sent for him to come in at once. He was glad the other gentlemen were taking precautionary measures—something must be done, and at once, too. For himself he had a great deal to lose, and must look after it at once.

“I understood you were expecting one of the candidates for the borough to come to Woody Knoll?—my son told me so, I think,” said Mr. Knightly.

“He was to have come either to-day or to-morrow,” said Mr. Gain; “but I sent off an express this morning, to delay his visit for a few days.”

“It would not have done just now,” said Mr. Knightly; “I hope quiet will be restored before the election; but it is only right to use proper precaution.”

“I never interfere myself with politics,” said the rector; “but I would far rather have seen your friend at the rectory, than that any gentleman should suppose there could be any danger in his coming to SADBorough.”

Mr. Gain thanked Mr. Saxon; but the rector’s opinion was certainly not held by the others—they felt the obnoxious candidate was better away for the present.

While they were talking, Mr. Mills returned from his early ride; but his road home took him through the other end of the street, so that he did not pass the group. Immediately on his arrival, his boy told him that he had been wanted. He inquired where—he thought

it was a patient, he would go at once.

“’Tis something wrong, I reckons, sir,” said the boy; “’twere Mr. Knightly, and Mr. Saxon, and the mayor, all on ’em—it looked bad, I thought, to see they three together.”

He gave a sort of side wink, not intended for his master’s observation; but he quite agreed with the boy that it looked bad; and having heard some rumour of what was going on, thought he would keep out of it.

“I cannot stay, Tom—it’s quite impossible,” he said; “tell my man to saddle my bay horse at once” (Mr. Mills was very fond of using the possessive pronoun), “I’m going for a long ride; and then come in and take my orders about the medicines you have to take out; and if anyone calls, say I’m gone to see a patient in the country, and it’s quite uncertain when I shall be able to return.”

The boy went off to the stable, leading the

horse which had just come home, and told the man to saddle “’tother, and look sharp about it, master was in a terrible hurry—some one must be bad, sure !”

He then went back, taking hurried orders, and seeing his master put up a case and different medicines ; and as soon as the horse was brought round, Mr. Mills mounted, and rode off in great haste, telling his boy again to say he could not possibly stop ; he was extremely sorry, but he was obliged to go immediately into the country.

As he went out at one end of the street, Mr. Knightly entered it at the other. It was as well it was so, as, in such an urgent case, perhaps the delay of even a few minutes might have been of serious consequence to the patient in the country.

The boy was not so anxious as his master respecting the welfare of the sick people ; so,

after looking about a little from the top door-step, he went down to assist the cook in some matters that did not fall exactly within the sphere of his own duties ; but he found that doing so conduced greatly to his personal comfort, particularly at meal times. He then enjoyed a little flirtation with the black-eyed housemaid ; and having in this manner arranged his domestic affairs to his own satisfaction, he proceeded to give his attention to the public well-being.

“ Now, Mary Hann, my dear,” said he to the housemaid, a fine young woman, more than a head taller than himself, “ you mind and be very partic’ler as to these ’ere medicines I leave, to give ’em to the people as calls just exactly as they’s directed ; and remember, as may be there’s lives a-depend-ing on it.”

Then going out at the door with the things

he had to take, packed in a covered basket, with a handle across, he turned his head with a knowing wink and parting nod of admiration to the pretty housemaid, and then leisurely proceeded on his way. The better streets of the town were still very empty; a few gentlemen were walking about, apparently busy and anxious; a few work-people were standing in groups, idle and careless-looking; the shops were open, but few customers were going in and out, and he soon decided that things were looking very dull. So after calling at one or two houses, he determined, before proceeding further, he would just walk through some of the back streets, to have a look round, and see what might be going on.

There things presented a very different aspect—the women and children were standing round the doors, or dragging about the

streets, talking earnestly to their acquaintance ; the men were collecting in knots, with angry faces and gesticulating menaces. Round the door of the “ Wolf’s Arms ” there was a great crowd, which was rapidly increasing ; and Rogues Roost was nearly impassable. He presently met Jack Martin.

“ What’s up to-day, Jack ? ” he inquired.

Jack had been rather hurt by his friend’s conduct towards him since his elevation, so he answered drily—

“ Fun, I reckons.”

“ Queer sort of fun it seems to me ; it don’t look noways respectable.”

“ Don’t it ? ” replied Jack.

The doctor’s boy felt himself in an anomalous position ; his sympathies naturally went with his own class—his boy’s love of fun and mischief would have made him delight to have run about with Jack, seeing all he could,

and adding to the confusion as much as possible ; but then the feeling came to him that he now belonged to a respectable profession, that, as compared with Jack, he was himself one of the upper classes, and that it was for him to stand by them in any emergency. So, resisting the temptation of throwing the basket, bottles and all, into the gutter, and joining in the wild groan that was just then heard to issue from the group standing around the "Wolf's Arms," he held it firmly in his hands, and determined to live or die on the side of order and respectability, and to fight to the death in defence of the pills and draughts. Having made this determination, he again addressed his *ci-devant* friend.

"I really wonder, Jack," he said, "that you like to go about so ragged—it looks so bad ; and standing about with the rabble in this way, it's quite disrespectful."

Jack glared fiercely at him ; he was intensely envious of his appearance, and of the good luck which had procured him his present situation, so he replied : “ It’s downright disrespectful to a-wear other peoples’ clothes, and be dressed up just like a monkey, and a-showing to all as you’re a slave ! ”

The boy with the buttons forgot his duty, forgot his profession, forgot the sick people ; he gave the basket a swing round, and brought it down heavily on Jack’s head. The blow gave a ringing sound, and the bottles fell out with a crash on the pavement. Jack gave him a blow in return—a regular fight ensued. The boy at first used his basket, but soon threw that away, trusting to his fists in preference. Jack tore at the buttons ; the boy grew furious, and tore at Jack’s hair ; the fight waxed hotter and hotter, when suddenly a rush was made by the crowd at the

“Wolf’s Arms,” and before they were aware of what was going on, they were both overturned and rolling in the gutter, together with the basket and the bottles.

They got up, somewhat dirty and crest-fallen. Jack followed the mob; the boy picked up his basket—it was battered in—there were no bottles to put into it—they were all shattered to pieces, so he consoled himself with the hope that the people would be better without the stuff; though he would not have confided that idea to anyone but the pretty housemaid, whom he considered in some measure to belong to the profession; and as he felt he was likely to receive from the mob more insults of the same kind as he had met with from Jack, he took his way towards the more respectable streets of the town, feeling they were better suited to a young gentleman of his appearance.



CHAPTER XII.

THE RIOT AT SADBOROUGH.

A MEETING was again held on the Monday morning at the “Wolf’s Arms.” It was a noisy, riotous meeting enough—no two thought alike; some wished for conciliatory measures, others were determined not to accept any concession; they would let the masters and the farmers see that they had been ground down long enough, and were now resolved to show that they had the power to dictate terms to those who employed them, and were determined to exert it.

The information that the candidate for the forthcoming election, who would vote in the House against the Bill, was expected at Sadborough, and would be the guest of Mr. Gain, had been received with extreme disapprobation.

It was a long time before any settled plan of proceeding could be decided upon; at length it was arranged that a deputation of three men, on whom the others thought they could rely, should call on Messrs. Gain and Twine at their counting-house, and inform them that if they expected their men to return to work, it must be on different terms from those previously paid.

The one-eyed man suggested that Mr. Gain ought to be told that, if he voted at the election against the people, they would leave work immediately; but this was negatived. The wiser ones thought it was better to settle

the question of wages, and leave the other matter for the present.

The deputation reached the counting-house just after the arrival of Mr. Gain. His partner had gone out, and had not yet returned. The men knocked.

“Come in,” was the reply.

They entered. He was standing on the hearth-rug, with his back to the fire. The men not having begun actual rioting, there was an appearance of outward respect, and these were somewhat superior to many of the others.

There was a short pause; the men felt awkward, and Mr. Gain did not care to help them; but presently he said—

“Are you wanting anything with me?—if so, let me know what it is.”

“We be come, sir,” said the foremost, touching his cap, “to say we don’t mind

working, if we've got things our own way."

The terms were named.

"I daresay you don't mind working; but I object to employing you. Why are none of you doing anything this morning, putting us out so much?"

"Now there's enough to lade the ship, there's little enough work given out," said another man; "and 'twere hard to turn we off so soon as 'twere done—we've worked hard, and you knows it, Mr. Gain."

"There has been more work than usual this winter, and now because it's slack, you are more angry than if it had been short all the winter—and none of you are out of work, or ever need be."

"'Tis hard on the others; and if we work better, we ain't paid enough."

"We won't work no more at that same pay," said another.

“Then let working alone,” said Mr. Twine, who came in at that moment.

The men knew they had been asking too much ; they did not expect their terms would be granted, but they thought they might have obtained some concession from Mr. Gain—they hoped very little from his partner.

“You are an idle set, and may live without work, if you can,” he continued ; “we are not bound to you—we can get others.”

This was received with decided disapprobation.

“We are willing enough to work at what’s right and fair, but not just to work when we’s wanted, and turned off in a minute when we ain’t—we won’t stand it !” was the reply.

Mr. Twine was not a favourite.

“You had better leave,” he said.

“Then give us a plain answer to take back

to them as sent us." And the fresh terms required were repeated.

"Then take a plain answer—No!" said Mr. Twine:

"We do not agree to the terms," said Mr. Gain.

The men gave a murmur of disapprobation, and left.

The partners looked at one another and continued silent. They were by no means sure that they had been acting wisely—a small concession might have made many of the best workers return; and if this continued, they would suffer great loss.

The deputation went back to the "Wolf's Arms." During their absence, the meeting had become quite tumultuous.

"If they gets their way, what good be that going to do us?" said a day-labourer.

"You have begun at the wrong end, my

friends," said the one-eyed man; "as to higher wages to one or to another, that's a mere nothing. What you want is to have your wrongs righted; what you want is to have votes, all of you, then you'd get your own way."

"I don't see how, though," said another.

"You'd make the laws, instead of keeping them," replied he; "there's something in that."

"Make 'em, and not mind 'em!" was shouted aloud.

"Then stand up for your rights," said the one-eyed man.

"What's standing?—we'll fight for 'em!" was exclaimed.

"Don't let that man come to Sadborough," continued Mrs. Brown's lodger.

"Bad for he if he do," said a man, grinding his teeth, with a heavy oath.

The talk continued, and it was not carried on without something to drink. The landlord of the "Wolf's Arms" was pretty well employed. The crowd on the outside became larger, waiting to hear what was being done. Just at this time the men returned from Mr. Gain's.

"What will 'em do?" was eagerly asked.

"Nothing!" was the reply.

And a loud groan arose. They entered. The same question was asked, the same reply given. They had been worked up, they had been waiting, they were idle and wretched; the answer was received with a yell of fury—a rush was made down the stairs—the crowd outside joined in—groans and yells of anger arose—they were caught up by the women who were waiting around, and then without any set purpose, but with a determination to destroy somebody or something, the mob

rushed on, down Fivefinger Street, upsetting, as has been stated, Jack and the doctor's boy in the gutter.

The High Street did not long continue empty after this ; from side streets, from back lanes, from dark courts, the people streamed out—it was astonishing where they could have come from. Where two or three men were standing together, in a moment there were twenty ; it seemed as if they must have sprung up from the very ground.

The mob was increasing every minute ; there were some hundreds, armed with sticks or stones in the High Street of SADBROUGH. The inhabitants were putting up their shutters in haste, stones were flying about, many windows were broken ; a party of constables endeavoured to interfere ; a fight ensued, there were many broken heads, but their staves were easily wrenched from them ; it was evi-

dent they were perfectly useless to enforce order. And then the mob, elated with their triumph, halted, and a discussion took place as to what they should next do.

They were thoroughly disorganized; they had formed no plan, they had no leaders; a word would sway them, but the evil passions of their nature had been aroused, and until they had perpetrated some mischief, there was little hope that they would return quietly to their homes.

“Smash in the Town Hall!” was cried, and a shower of stones went against the windows.

“Hurrah!” and the wild shout echoed down the street, and was heard as far off as Fairleigh.

“Where’s Gain and Twine?—they’ll be down in their counting-house!” and a rush was made down the lane in that direction.

“They’s left!—they’s not there!” was heard said.

“Then we’ll go to Woody Knoll, and make ’em hear us there!” was called out; and the proposition was received with shouts of acclaim.

Sticks and stones were gathered in abundance as they went on, and the mob increased by continual additions pouring up from out of the side streets. The one-eyed man was among them, but by no means putting himself obtrusively forward; but he was not going to allow anything like pillage to go on without his presence. Jem Brown and Jack Martin were there, enjoying themselves intensely, though Jack was not quite comfortable; he knew it was all wrong, but he contented himself with thinking he was doing as others did, and indeed much less, for he had not thrown the stones, nor fought with the constables—he was only there seeing the fun.

On, on they went, the screaming, hooting mob, men, women, boys, all joining, all adding to the wild uproar and confusion, down through the High Street of Sadborough, out into the high road, still calling out, "Woody Knoll!" "We'll have it about their ears!" "We'll have it down!"

On they went, through the quiet green lane that turned out of the high road, so still, so quiet, startling the still frosty air with the wild, harsh shouts of their voices. On they went, coming to the gate that led into the grounds; many leaped over it, but they were not in the mood to bear even such a slight obstacle as that—it was off its hinges, and laid down in a moment. On, on, over the gravel walk, over the green lawn, over the trim flower-beds, tearing up the shrubs, trampling down the flowers, rending branches off the trees, and terrifying the

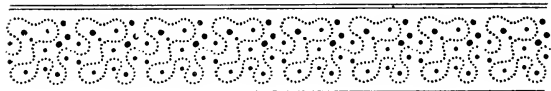
inmates into a state of utter distraction.

The Miss Gains were fluttering upstairs and down like doves terrified in their nest; all the colour gone from Bertha's fair cheek, who looked anxiously about, in the full belief that she should presently see Mr. Mills, like a knight-errant of old, coming to their rescue at the head of a troop of horse; but in vain did she gaze as far as she could see—Mr. Mills was miles away, pursuing his quiet avocations, with a mind calmly at ease, in the knowledge of fulfilling duty, even at a sacrifice; and Bertha's colour paled more visibly still.

Mrs. Gain was wrapt up in the sofa cushions of the drawing-room, going off into hysterics; the servants were loudly calling for master, and putting the shutters up as quickly as possible; the dogs were barking, and clanking their chains, with their wild efforts to get

loose ; the mob was drawing nearer and nearer to the house ; everything within and without was wild riot and confusion, when, just as the foremost men drew near the steps, the door opened. The men made a dash forward ; it would have fared ill with Mr. Gain had he emerged at that moment ; but the door of Woody Knoll opened, and then shut, and the mob halted, finding themselves confronted by the set figure, imperturbable countenance, and flaxen hair of the rector of Sadborough.





CHAPTER XIII.

THE COLT BREAKS OUT OF HARNESS.

MR. SAXON shut the door as calmly and quietly as if he had been going out in his usual placid gentlemanly way; he felt that the spring lock was fast, and then turned round on the top of the flight of stone steps, facing the infuriated crowd. Had anyone been there calm enough to have looked on dispassionately, the scene would indeed have appeared a strange one; the wild furious mob, with outstretched arms and inflamed faces, uttering wild fearful oaths, and screaming in their fury, brought thus as it were to

bay by the unmoved calmness and utter fearlessness of one man. Mr. Saxon was a man of peace, both by nature and by calling, who would never have exerted himself if he could possibly have lived on without doing so, who might have passed through life without knowing, or caring to know, what power he possessed over the minds of others, unless, as in the present instance, a circumstance occurred to call his latent faculties into exercise. An aristocrat by birth and education, his sympathies went more with the actual poor than with the trading classes who employed them; and though he did not argue as much as his curate did that the Church had in all ages stood on the side of the people, that was principally because he was not so fond of arguing; but Mr. Saxon's strong point was attachment to his parishioners, because they were such, and quite

independent of any rank they held in the social scale, and perhaps, differently as he carried the ideas out, it might be from him that James Knightly derived some of his views.

But the rector now was the right man in the right place; the calm, passive, inactive courage of the fair-haired man giving him at that time an influence which a more energetic nature could not have possessed. His blood certainly coursed rather faster than usual through his veins; there was a feeling of something almost like pleasurable excitement thrilling through him; he had a work before him to do—he felt equal to it, and did it. For perhaps almost the first time in his life, he was addressing an audience thoroughly awake. He at once seized out of the multitude the foremost men, knowing them, and calling them by name; he was always accustomed to

do so when he met them, so that his voice seemed immediately to awake other recollections, and arouse old remembrances, a wonderful advantage to a speaker.

“Eh, Smith, why, what’s all this? Hodge, my good fellow, what are you doing, attacking a peaceable person’s house in this manner, for no assignable reason whatever, as if you were a set of ruffians, instead of decently behaved men, as I consider you?”

They had halted suddenly when they first saw who it was that confronted them. A mob in a small country town, where each knows the other, and where the clergyman is known by all, is a very different thing from a mob in a large town or city, where no influence but that of the strong hand can have any power, and where the danger of detection is very much less than where men can at any moment be singled out by their names. Here,

with the exception of a few strangers, all knew the rector; and they must have been far more excited than they even then were before they would have thought of harming him, and the men he had named by no means liked being marked out.

“We ain’t a-going to touch you, sir; but we’s a-going into that house,” said the foremost man, and a few stepped forward with the intention of removing him forcibly from his position, previous to attacking the door; but as they did so, a stone, evidently aimed on purpose from the back of the crowd, struck within a hair’s breadth of his head; and Smith, who, after having been singled out, had constituted himself his protector, with one hand on Mr. Saxon’s arm, turned savagely round on those who were crowding on.

“Let be, will you, and leave I to manage, or I’ll fling at you next!” he exclaimed.

“Shame to fight wi’ the parson!—keep your stones for Gain!” cried several voices.

The rector saw his opportunity, and endeavoured to take advantage of the slight reaction of feeling.

“And what right have you to kill Mr. Gain, any more than myself? I came over here to endeavour to arrange matters. If you kill or ruin Mr. Gain, there is sure ruin for yourselves. I’m ashamed of you, quite! Take my advice, and go home—Mr. Gain is not here.”

“’Tis no good preaching now,” said the man, still holding him firmly; “keep that for your pulpit—it be our turn now.”

“Send the parson down here!” was cried from the back of the crowd; “hand him over, we’ll take care of he!—we wants Gain!”

“Mr. Gain is not here,” was once more quietly repeated.

“Not here!—coward!—sneak!—puts the parson forward!—knows we shouldn’t touch he!”

It was a psychological phenomenon—the power that the one calm, well-balanced, perfectly self-possessed mind held over the many unbalanced, wild, turbulent, half-bewildered spirits; but that was a state of things that could not last.

“We’ll not be kept here, though, to listen to sermons. Send the parson down!” was reiterated. “Bang in that door, Smith!” and a rush was made onwards.

“I tell you once more,” said the rector, “Mr. Gain is not here.”

Smith and another powerful man had him in their grasp, and in another minute he would have been handed down, and lifted like a child over the heads of the crowd, to be kept in safe custody, while the others pro-

ceeded with their work; but that it seemed his statement as to Mr. Gain's absence was corroborated by some other information, for there was a movement among those furthest off. The cry was raised—"To Gain's counting-house!"

The crowd visibly thinned, and in a few minutes Mr. Saxon was left with only a few of those who had first surrounded him. It would hardly be right to say that he recovered his courage on seeing this, for it had never perceptibly flagged in the least degree; but he now again ventured to speak.

"I am quite ashamed of you, my men," he said, "conducting yourselves in such a manner; you will be the sufferers for all this—you put it out of the masters' power to help you—you had better disperse at once, and not give me the painful duty of using my knowledge of your names against you, which I should much regret doing."

The men relaxed their hold, uttering a few oaths. As the crowd left, a volley of stones was aimed at the windows, which were pretty well smashed ; but none of them touched Mr. Saxon, though he had some very narrow escapes. The crowd gave three groans, and left, more than ever determined to execute their vengeance on Mr. Gain, whenever they could meet with him, which they were resolved to do.

The rector was left alone, standing on the top door-step, where he had first appeared ; his hat had been beaten off, and when he picked it up, was somewhat battered ; his arm was pinched and bruised ; but he dusted the sleeve of his coat, put his hat into as good shape as he could manage, smoothed his hair into its usual neat appearance, and then taking out the latch-key, which he had all the time in his pocket, again re-entered the house.

“Your windows are terribly smashed, Mrs. Gain,” he said; “you’ll want the glazier here, and I don’t suppose there’s one to be found.”

But poor Mrs. Gain was in no humour for talking—her usual voluble speech was quite over for the present; she could only press the rector’s hand, as she burst into a flood of tears, murmuring out her husband’s name, whose danger, now that their own was a little over, rose with increased vividness before her mind. When she had in some degree recovered herself, he soothed and calmed her, speaking of trust and faith, and the love of an overruling Providence, in a manner that those who had never seen him at such a time would not have supposed him equal to. But she was scarcely capable of taking in what was said; and although he was doubtless unconscious of it himself, the rector’s

manner was in some small degree more joyous than usual, and this struck chill.

It was not that he had escaped injury—he never would believe he had been in any danger ; but he felt that he had been a true prophet. The mob were quiet, though just then a little excited—they had evidently listened to what he had said to them, and he believed now the danger was all over. So he consoled Mrs. Gain, and she was certainly much comforted at his presence, and he remained some time longer.

Mr. Gain was returning home from his counting-house, as the mob went up the lane ; he heard the hooting and screaming at his house, then the breaking of the windows. It was a terrible time to him, to think of his family left there unprotected. But he knew his presence would only make things worse, and he delayed his return.

Presently he heard the tramping feet, sounding as if they were returning—he forgot his own danger, in the thought of the safety of his wife and children. On came the rushing crowd, nearer, nearer, shouting, yelling more than ever!—he was obliged again to think of his own safety. He just saw the foremost—he was barely in time—another instant, and they must have seen him. He jumped over the hedge, crouching behind a hay-stack. On came the tramping feet, on came the screaming voices; yet he almost forgot himself in thankfulness that they were returning; but he felt sure that the reason they had not entered his house was their finding that he was absent. He knew they were now looking for him, and he crouched closer than ever to the hay-stack.

The mob went straight down the lane, but that was too narrow for them—many of the

boys leaped over the hedges, and rambled through the fields. He felt his life was scarcely worth anything, should any one see him—he who was the mark for all this fury—he would certainly be torn to pieces! He leaned still closer to the stack—the voices passed by—the tramping feet were heard softer and softer—the noise was dying away in the distance—his hopes revived—he should escape them after all, when suddenly he saw a face looking at him round the corner of the stack.

The revulsion of feeling, to find he was discovered, after thinking he had escaped, was almost worse than if he had been found at first; but he did not lose his presence of mind—he beckoned to the person, whoever it might be. But the face disappeared. He felt sure now he had gone to tell the news that he was found. He was about to get up, and try and gain the shelter of his house

before they were upon him, when the face reappeared. He got up, and tried to catch the boy, for such was evidently the person whose face he had as yet only seen ; but he was too quick for him ; and as Mr. Gain was still fearful of leaving the shelter, he was greatly at disadvantage. But again the boy peeped, and this time came quite round. Mr. Gain made a dash at him, but failed ; but he saw the boy put his finger across his lips. This gave him some hope, and he spoke, but it was in a hoarse whisper, calling the boy to come to him. He seemed somewhat afraid, but did so.

“Where are the mob gone ?” inquired Mr. Gain.

“Down to your counting-house, sir ; they’ll a-murder you downright, if they catches you,” said the boy, consolingly.

“They will not catch me, unless you tell,”

and Mr. Gain took some money out of his pocket.

“I bean’t a-going to tell,” said Jack Martin, for he it was; “but I bean’t a-going to be bought off—they’d murder I then!”

“What have they done at Woody Knoll?” inquired Mr. Gain.

“Broked the windows—nought else; the parson stopp’d ’em,” said Jack.

“Which parson?” inquired Mr. Gain.

“Mr. Saxon,” said Jack.

“Are any about?—can I go home, do you think?” asked Mr. Gain. He thought the boy was to be trusted.

“I reckons you can; but I’d best go and see,” and he left.

Mr. Gain hardly knew which was the wisest plan to pursue—whether to leave immediately, hoping to escape any stragglers, or to wait Jack’s return. He waited a little,

and then, not being able to bear the suspense any longer, left.

Presently, for he was listening most attentively, he heard footsteps coming to meet him, and Jack's voice in conversation with another person. He was about again to make his escape, when he saw that the person with whom the boy was walking, and whom he was bringing towards him, was none other than Mr. Saxon.

The gentlemen shook hands, and the rector warmly congratulated Mr. Gain on his escape ; for even he was perfectly aware that it would have been a most dangerous thing if the infuriated people had at that moment met with the person they were seeking. After exchanging a few words, Mr. Gain looked round for the boy, but he had escaped—he had made a great sacrifice at the shrine of duty in delaying his return so long ; but he

could not wait any longer without seeing the fun that was going on; and before he was missed, he was gone a long way on his return to SADBorough.

After passing the place where Mr. Gain was hiding, the mob went on, re-entering the town; they went straight to the counting-house, where they broke all the windows, stove in the door, and ransacked the place. There was no one there, nor anything valuable to be found—everything had been removed. There was a little silver in a box, which was taken by the first who laid hands on it; the mob broke all the furniture to pieces, and then left. They turned away disappointed; many by this time had had quite enough of rioting; they were tired, thirsty; there had been nothing to keep up their spirits, nothing to drink; had they got to the cellar at Woody Knoll, it would have been different. A great

number were dispirited ; but on coming again into the town, they were joined by a reinforcement of women and children, and after destroying all they could at the counting house, they went back to the High Street. The mayor, together with Mr. Knightly and some other gentlemen, was at the windows of the Town Hall, and the Riot Act was read ; and Mr. Knightly spoke a few words, recommending them to disperse before the military, who had been sent for, arrived from Cherterton. The fury of the mob was well-nigh spent, there had been nothing to keep it up, and they did not like the idea of seeing the soldiers.

Just at this moment, from a side street, emerged Mr. Quaver. The poor little tailor was partially recovered, and had come in to see what was going on ; he was inclined to remonstrate with a few of the foremost. He

would take the side of order and religion ; he had high ideas of his own eloquence ; he felt it quite a mercy he had come upon them just at that very moment.

“ I’m a-glad to see how quiet and peaceable like you all be,” said he to a man who was near him.

“ Be ’ee, then gie us a speech, answer they at the windows,” and the men lifted him up. They were quite ready to end in a joke.

“ Hurrah ! let’s have a speech!—let’s gie him a ride!” was exclaimed.

Poor little man, almost before he knew what was going on, he was mounted on a man’s shoulder ; then, even in the middle of a speech he had commenced making, he found himself taken down again, and finally seated on a barrel, which was placed on a plank, the ends of which rested on the shoulders of two tall men.

There were tremendous shouts of mocking and laughter, but he took it all in good part, though he was not a little frightened.

“Let’s have the speech—the mayor be awaiting for an answer!” was cried out, as he was carried straight in front of the windows of the Town Hall. He felt rather proud of the honour that had been done him, but, like other seats that depend on popular favour, it was not a secure one, and he was aware of it. However he began his speech, but he was interrupted at every word by cheers and groans, and cries of “That’s it! leave off!” &c.

And presently he was carried away, as he was finishing what he considered a very fine sentence, and a shower of stones were thrown at the windows of the Town Hall, ere the crowd proceeded further up the street.

The gentlemen were obliged to retreat, but Mr. Knightly hoped this piece of folly would

divert the people's minds, and that the riot would yet end without any serious mischief. All the gentlemen wished, if possible, to avoid having the military in the town.

When they again ventured to the windows, they saw the retreating crowd sway backwards and forwards ; they all looked anxiously out—the cheers and groans which had been heard as they passed different houses, were now mingled with screams and cries from the women and children ; and as Mr. Knightly strained his eyes to discover what was the matter, he saw in the middle of the throng his son, with the black colt in the gig. He was just returning home, knowing nothing of the riot. As he came near he heard the noise and uproar ; the colt heard it, too, and pricked up his ears and listened. His master was going to take him down a side street, but before he could do so the crowd was upon him.

The colt reared, and backed on to the pavement; the women who were near screamed violently; the animal backed again; the mob, not perceiving the gig, shouted as they had done before. The colt leaped across the road, and almost went in at a window; but thinking better of it, gave another start back. The groom got out, and tried to turn the horse's head; but he could not quiet him. The women now screamed violently—the creature gave a plunge forward. Collins held him as well as he could; the curate was about to jump out, but was afraid of losing the little control he still had; and the people, pushed on by those behind, were under the horse's feet.

The mob came on; Collins was knocked away from his hold, almost thrown down, and the colt went on for a few steps, and again began plunging. A man caught him roughly

—he kicked violently ; but another man took him by the other side. They would perhaps have led him on safely, when a cry arose that the military was coming.

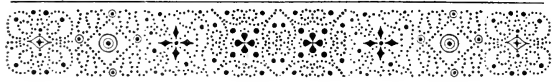
No one knew who first gave the alarm, but it spread in a minute. The men who were carrying Mr. Quaver forgot their burden ; they let go, he fell down, plank, tub, and all, heavily on the ground ; the top of the tub broke in, and there was the unfortunate little tailor, with nothing to be seen but his head. The men let go the colt's head with a sudden jerk ; all sought their own safety.

James Knightly still did not like to let go his hold, and it was soon too late for him to attempt it. The groom made vain attempts to reach his master, but could not succeed in doing so. The animal plunged forward—no one thought of stopping him again, easily as at first it might have been done ; and, as the

crowd thinned, he went on at a wild pace.

The men rushed down the side streets, leaving the women and children ; the colt went on, trampling over all in his way, now quite beyond anything like control. He took, however, the right turn to Fairleigh, and had there been a few miles of level road, his master might yet have managed him ; but they were soon at the side gate at which he usually entered. It was close shut ; but as he was often leaped over it when he was ridden, it never entered his foolish young head that the slight impediment of the gig was a thing of any consequence ; he leaped right over, escaping with only a slight blow on one of his hind legs. The harness gave way, the shafts snapped short off ; his master, seeing the catastrophe inevitable, let go the reins, to prevent being dragged over his head. The gig came with a smash against the gate, and

as the colt trotted quietly enough now up to his stable-door, James Knightly was lying on the road stunned, and bleeding from a deep cut on the forehead, and with his right shoulder out of joint.



CHAPTER XIV.

SADBOROUGH WITHOUT MR. MILLS.

THE military had been sent for, as Mr. Knightly had told the mob, and they were really on their way to Sadborough; though the rioters were mistaken in their idea that James Knightly had been sent to fetch them, or that they were closely following his gig. But the effect was the same—a perfect panic ensued; the men went off either into the public-houses, or else to their homes, leaving the women and children to bear the brunt of the attack; though these also followed as soon as they could.

The High Street was very soon almost as deserted as in the morning, the broken windows of the Town Hall, and of some of the houses and shops, alone telling of what had been going on. The last act of the mob was to send a flight of stones at the corner shop of a grocer, where they had most of them small accounts. This was done to pay him off, as they said ; but the shutters being up at the shop front, it was only a few panes of the windows upstairs that were broken.

The constables took a few of the ring-leaders into custody, without opposition, none of their friends assisting to prevent it—all seemed too glad to keep out of their way. Those apprehended were taken off at once to Chesterton, to prevent any attempt at rescue ; and the officer in charge of the military was informed that the riot, they hoped, was quelled ; but at the same time was requested

to be in readiness, should any further outbreak take place.

The flame had died out for want of fuel. Had they entered the cellars of Woody Knoll, or wreaked their vengeance on Mr. Gain, things would have been very different ; but they could do no more without something to drink ; and the determined appearance of those in authority, and the dread of seeing the soldiers, sent them to seek it in quiet.

Mr. Quaver was left in the barrel, helpless, and almost alone ; he called out to one and another—they all passed him by, intent only on their own safety ; he tried to raise himself out of it—he could not do so, and he was terribly bruised. Fearful thoughts came over him of what would be his fate when the soldiers came and found him ; his hour of triumph had been a very short one, and the retribution was come. He called aloud for

help, he struck frantically at the sides of the barrel. At length a man came up, and lifted him out. The poor little tailor could scarcely stand.

“You’d better make haste and get home,” said the man; “the soldiers be a-coming, and the constables be a-taking everybody up; and you was seen by ’em all—you’ll be in Chester-ton gaol for sartain before long!”

“I was in the forefront of the hottest battle,” said he; “I was a-standing up for the people, and if they puts me in prison, it’s only what have been done to good men before me, and I should a-glory in the persecution!”

But even as he spoke the thought came to him, that if his wife heard of what he had been doing, she would make him feel that she did not approve; and when that was the case, he always suffered pretty well at home

for the public spirit he had manifested abroad.

“’Tis no use standing here talking,” said the man who had assisted him; “I’m going, and I reckons you’d better too, if you can get along anyhow.”

It was indeed with great difficulty he managed it—he hobbled on as best he could; and strength and the power of walking came back in some degree as he exerted it. He heard a horse, and hid himself; but it passed on; he came out, and at length, though with many delays of the like sort, got home.

The report of what he had been doing had reached his wife before he arrived. She was getting very anxious about him, and was coming to look for him when she saw him enter. Many friends came in during the course of the evening, to hear his account of what had

been going on at Sadborough. He recounted all he knew, giving his own speech at full length.

But a very valiant man was the little tailor of Sadbroke; and as great minds of all ages are akin in thought and feeling, his last words, as he parted that evening from his friends, were those of that brave and worthy public servant, Dogberry, of old time—"If anything's the matter, call up me!"

Wearily went on the day at the doctor's house; hour after hour passed by, but the master did not return, neither did the boy. The stable-man went home as usual to his dinner, and after that nothing more was seen of him either. There were repeated knocks and rings at the door. A messenger came from Woody Knoll, saying,

"Mrs. Gain was very bad in hysterics, would Mr. Mills please to step out?"

The answer was returned—Mr. Mills was gone to see a patient in the country.

Some nervous ladies sent for the doctor, they felt as if a visit from him would do them good. The answer was the same. People came in with broken heads and broken arms ; women carrying hurt and terrified children, who screamed fearfully ; but they were obliged to go untended and uncared for—there was no doctor.

The housemaid was weary with answering the door, and with straining her eyes out of a top window, in the endeavour to gain a view of what was going on in the High Street. The cook was anxious respecting the riot, and more than anxious concerning her dinner, which was nearly spoiled ; they had neither of them tasted anything—they were too excited to eat, and were waiting for the boy.

Another hasty ring was heard—it was the servant from Fairleigh.

“Mr. Mills at home?” he inquired, in a hurried manner.

The girl could bear it no longer—she burst into tears.

“There’s only me and cook—there ain’t no one else in the house, and it ain’t no use coming to we.”

“Mr. James is killed a-most—he’s a-wanted directly—send him up, please, as soon as ever he comes in.”

“Oh! dear! dear!” she said; “we shall be killed, all on us!—I daresay Tom be dead a-ready; and maister’s out—gone to see a patient in the country, and there’s only me and cook, and we shall be killed next!—oh! dear!—oh! dear!”

The man did not stay to hear her lament—he went quickly away when he heard Mr. Mills was not to be had.

The girl went down into the kitchen, and told the cook.

“There was dreadful work going on!—they’d a-killed young Mr. Knightly, and they couldn’t get any doctor.”

“And the mutton a-spoiled, and maister not come,” said the cook.

They threw their aprons over their heads, and sat sobbing one on each side of the fire.

Later in the day the boy came home, without his basket, with his face terribly swelled and two black eyes, his jacket torn to pieces, and all the buttons gone. The housemaid let him in. When she saw him, she threw herself on his neck, hugging him, and sobbing afresh. They were both too glad to see him to be angry with him for his desertion.

The cook bathed his eyes, the housemaid looked at his jacket; it was hopeless to attempt mending it. He was terribly bruised,

but there was no master to do anything for him, so the cook made him some treacle-posset, and tucked him up in bed, where, however, he could scarcely move or sleep.

They heard afterwards that, his respectability disappearing with his buttons, he had been seen fighting on the side of the mob; but as he was very silent himself as to the events of the day, they never exactly knew the truth, especially as he gave a flat contradiction to the accusation whenever it was brought against him.

The rings continued. A child had been run over, and a woman knocked down. What could have become of Mr. Mills? Dr. Smith was at Fairleigh, and another doctor with him; there was nobody to do anything, and so many people hurt. There was another message from Woody Knoll; the same answer was sent back. The housemaid was tired of

answering the rings ; people began really to be apprehensive that some accident had happened to Mr. Mills. However, towards morning, he returned. Nothing had happened to him ; his horse was very muddy and splashed ; he was obliged to take it himself to the stable. He was looking very tired and seedy, but not worse than most others that morning at Sadborough. He was told of the inquiries that had been made for him ; he was very sorry he had been prevented coming home. He ordered some breakfast, and went immediately afterwards to Fairleigh.

When he saw James, he congratulated himself on the possession of that discretion which is the better part of valour, and which had kept him from returning at such a time of danger. He then went to Woody Knoll. On his way he met Mr. Saxon returning. He had been again on the same errand as that

which took him there the preceding day—the endeavour to induce Mr. Gain to make some small concession, or, at least, not to refuse employing the people again—and he told Mr. Mills he hoped he had succeeded in his efforts. He had never thought the SADBorough people would do more than bluster a little, and then quiet down, and the event proved he had been right.

Mr. Mills was too busy to stand long talking, and he presently went on. When he came to the house, and saw the state of ruin that it was in, he did feel a little queer; but he was a very good man, and thought to himself he had relied on Providence to protect Bertha; he did not think that Providence does work by means, and that had not Mr. Saxon been there yesterday, they might not all have escaped as easily as they did.

They were all very glad to see him. Mrs.

Gain was somewhat revived, though she still looked very shattered, and as if she had suffered very much; and Bertha's spirits and colour were neither by any means as high as usual; perhaps she felt she had been left alone in danger and trouble, but Mr. Mills's apologies were so satisfactory, and his anxiety to hear they were not the worse for all they had gone through, so evident, that he was forgiven; and his tender manner to Bertha was so sweet, she felt sure he would have sacrificed his life for hers, had he been in any way aware there was any danger.

They could scarcely talk of anything but Mr. Saxon; his noble conduct, such an excellent man, Mrs. Gain could not yet mention his name without tears—and so good of him to come over again that morning to try and set things to rights. Mr. Gain could not possibly refuse any request of the rector's; he

would endeavour to satisfy his workpeople in any reasonable demand.

After lingering as long as he possibly could, and gaining all the information they could give him respecting the riot, Mr. Mills took a loving farewell, assuring Bertha that all danger was over now ; but should he hear the slightest hint of anything further taking place, he should fly immediately on the wings of love to Woody Knoll—and she implicitly believed him.

He then retraced his steps to the town, and calling on the nervous ladies, told them all the news about that dear young Mr. Knightly, who was so very rash, and that excellent Mr. Saxon, who was so very calm and courageous ; and about the riot in general, and the attack on Woody Knoll in particular, for which they pitied the narrator intensely, remarking, with knowing little jerks of the

head, they were quite aware of what *his* sufferings must have been when he heard of it ; the dreadful fright it must have been to dear Mrs. Gain, and that sweet Bertha !

After half-an-hour's talk, he left them in the full belief that he himself had been the moving spring of all the good that had been done, and that, in some unexplained manner, it had been that dear Mr. Mills who had saved the town.

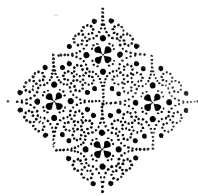
After this, finding things pretty quiet, he went into the back streets, as many more applications had been made that morning at the surgery, and looked after the poor people ; here he found several more laid up with broken heads and other injuries, than had ventured to come to him ; but he bound them all up, and sent them some medicine. They were not afraid of Mr. Mills knowing ; besides, they all said they had been injured in assist-

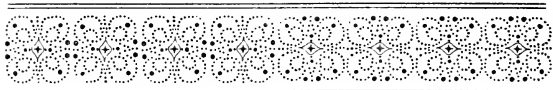
ing the constables. Perhaps he believed them ; at all events, it was long remembered how kind Mr. Mills had been at the time of "they riots." He was very busy all day, and for several days—the patients in the country had to wait now.

In the course of the day the boy got up, and went his rounds, with his face tied up, an old jacket on, and provided with a new basket. His master said very little to him, and got him a new jacket, only stopping a small portion of his wages to help to pay for it, as he thought it right he should suffer in some degree for his conduct.

So Sadborough quieted down, as the rector had foretold ; people returned to their business as usual, and if the patient in the country was none the worse for the unusual attention bestowed on him, and the patients in the town for the equally unusual neglect, why, medicine

must be a very wonderful thing, and possess most mysterious properties—as, doubtless, it does.





CHAPTER XV.

MR. QUAVER IN DUCK LANE.

THE riot was over—hushed—quelled. Law and order must ever gain the ascendancy ; miserable would it be for all if it were not so, miserable enough during the time such things are going on is it for all concerned. And what good had it wrought ? The ringleaders were in Chesterton gaol, waiting to be tried at the assizes ; their wives and families at home, well-nigh starving with cold and hunger, were made more wretched by the anxiety that was preying upon them. Those who had been the chief instigators of the affair were at large ;

they took care to escape justice. The speaker was gone to stir up strife in other places, the one-eyed man was free to go whither he would. He was much annoyed with the people of Sadbrough; he had gained nothing by all his efforts, there had been no pillage, no spoil—he had won nothing—he was going shortly to leave altogether. It was a hard time for the poor; work was slack, distrust had been raised in the minds of many people, the division between the classes was greater than before; there was less kindness shown by the rich; the poor had to bear their sorrows alone. This was the first fruit of the seed sown, but it would yet bear more abundantly. Jem Brown strolled one afternoon into the Martins' cottage, looking far more dirty and disreputable than when he used to live in Sun Court.

Tom spoke to him, but only got a surly reply.

Sally made some remark, but he scarcely answered her.

“I be comed in to look arter Jack,” he said.

“He be only gone out for a pail of water,” replied Sally; “he’ll be back in a minute or so.”

Soon he came in through the garden, with the buckets of water that he had filled at the pond.

“I be a-going down to port to see thick vessel a-loaded,” said Jem. “I thought maybe you’d come down ’long wi I.”

Jack liked anything better than fetching the water, so he put down his buckets, and the two sauntered out together.

“Where’s Jack?” inquired the Irish girl, who came in soon after.

“Gone out with Jem Brown,” replied Tom; “I wish, Molly—Oh! I wish so much they weren’t so together!”

“Don’t fret, Tom, ’tain’t no good,” said the girl; “I never frets—I should ha’ been dead long ago if I’d taken to that. Jack can take care of himself; he ought to know how, he’s big enough.”

Tom sighed, and said he supposed he was; he wished though he had work, and he heard his father say the same last night.

The boys went on together.

“’Tis dull enough here now, Jack,” said his friend; “the fun didn’t last long, and no good comed o’ it—leastways not to we.”

“Not to none, that I sees,” replied Jack. “I shouldn’t like to be in Chesterton gaol, a-going to be tried like they men. I’m main glad I kept out o’ it enough not to be tooked up. I shall be looking out for work, maybe I’ll get some as the weather gets fine.”

“What’s the good of work?—one get’s as good as nought for it. I’m a-going away; I

reckons there's places where I could do better; we haven't got no rights down here, I'm a-going to stand up for mine."

As he spoke, he took out of his pocket a tinder-box, and began striking the flint and steel together, and watching the sparks fly.

"I don't like riots much," he said; "there's better ways o' 'serting one's rights."

"Nonsense, Jem; whatever do'ee tell up such nonsense for? I've had enough of rioting too, it didn't turn out well, but 'twere fun for the time—but I'll have nought to do, as I always told 'ee, wi' mischief o' that sort—I don't a-like it."

"Then you may go home and keep your tinder-box to light your fire wi', that is, if you've got any to light, 't isn't many as have, and I bean't a-doing of any harm."

They came down to the port. The lading of the "Lady Bertha" was going on busily.

The boys looked on much interested, but Jem seemed dissatisfied.

“They be a-making money enough,” said he.

“Who’s a-making money?” asked Jack.

“Why Gain and Twine, to be sure; the riot ain’t a-done they any harm; they’s making enough, and they won’t even give work to such as wants it.”

“They always gives your mother, Jem,” replied his friend, “and I don’t think as you’d like work if you’d a-got it.”

“I don’t mind o’ some sorts, but ’tis terrible dull here; I be a-going away, or a-going to do summut; mother’s lodger’s often away—he’s a quick chap, he knows what he be a-doing of.”

“Here, you boys, get out of the way!” said a man, passing heavily loaded; “why bean’t you two at work?”

“Ain’t a-got none,” was the reply from both.

“Then don’t stand in the way of those as have ; and why don’t ’ee go to sea?—there’s boys a-wanted.”

He passed on.

“I’m not a-going to sea,” said Jem ; “what business was it of his’n to tell I to work, I wonder?”

He took out his tinder-box again.

“Mind what you’re at here, young chap,” said a sailor ; “go further off with they things, if you must be at it.”

“I won’t work for Gain and Twine,” said Jem ; “I axed ’em for it, and they wouldn’t give it—I’ll never do a stroke for ’em now—they only cares for themselves, and grinds the poor !”

“Why, whatever be the matter with ’ee, Jem?” said his companion ; “you’re out o’

sorts with everyone—I don't see as you have got such call to be grumbling."

"I've a right to grumble if I likes—there ain't no harm in grumbling; and if there be, I intends to do it till I leaves this 'ere old place. Mother's lodger says we's all put upon down here, and so we is!"

They went on sauntering about in the manner of idle boys, seeing the work going on all around them, and doing nothing themselves. After a time they left the port, and loitered back, just as lazily as they had come. They both went into the cottage together, and there found Mr. Quaver, who had come in to have a little talk with Job, respecting all that had been going on of late in the town.

"I hear they gived 'ee a bit o' a fall like, Mr. Quaver," said Job, jocosely.

"I never a-sought the honour, Mr. Martin

—never,” was the reply; “it was a-thrust upon me so to speak, and it was not for me to deny a-speaking the word in season, when the opportunity was a-put before me. I spokt the words conciliatory, as would, I did consider, settle the matter wi’ all parties; and, indeed, as all do say, it was they very words as quieted down both the aristocracy in the Town Hall, and the people who was collected outside; and as I do believe my ownself prevented the shedding of blood!”

“They let ’ee down, then, very quiet, considering ’ee was a-doing so much good,” said Job; “pride must have a fall, as you knows!”

“I was noway proud at the elewation, Mr. Martin—noways whatsoever; though no doubt it be a distinguished honour to be look’t up to in such a way by one’s fellow-creatures—poor, blind souls though they be,

most on 'em. I was in no ways set up."

"You was set down, as I heard," said Job, laughing, greatly to the delight of the boys, who were enjoying Mr. Quaver's discomfiture.

He certainly did not like to be reminded of his downfall; but he was not in any way discomposed.

"It was that 'ere wild horse of young Mr. Knightly's as did all the mischief—the rich a-trampling down of the poor, as is always the way of 'em—a-riding, so to speak, over the widow and the fatherless; the beast ought to be called Moloch, as no doubts he is, for I fears they do worship dumb idols up to Fairleigh, not to speak of putting their trust in horses, and pomps and vanities of this world, which passes away; though there was a time when I had hoped better things from that 'ere poor young man."

It was not the place in which to speak in this disparaging manner of the young curate.

“He was hurt hisself more nor anyone else,” said Nanny; “we miss he dreadful down here; and as to Tom, he cried so when he heard o’ the accident, there was scarce no quieting him.”

“There’s few like he, Mr. Quaver,” said Job; “you may depend on that; and you’d best not a-go saying anything agen he. I wonders you don’t go to church to Sadbroke, now he do preach.”

“I’m not a-blaming he, not a bit o’ it,” said the little tailor; “we’s all poor weak creaturs, and I was always uncommon partial to him, though I looks on him as terrible dark, a-riding and a-driving, and a-setting up schools as teach carnal teaching, wi’ a great black board as tells the stars, and puts down the numbers, like they as builded the

Tower of Babel ; but 'twill all be pulled down like that same ; he's a-lifted up in the pride of his own mind, but he've a-got time to turn it all over now in his own heart, and to think of what he've been a-doing of ; and I hopes he'll be a different sort of a man when he gets up from his sick bed—that is, if he ever do rise up agin ; but I hear as he's terrible bad."

" Oh ! no, Mr. Quaver," said Tom, unable any longer to resist speaking ; " I hope not—he's better, I know he's better. Mother saw Mr. Mills to-day, and asked him, and he says he's getting on now, and I do think I shall see him agin, please God. I have so prayed that He'll raise him up agin, and I do think as He will."

" Well, well," said Mr. Quaver, kindly, for he was not altogether destitute of feeling, and the tears in the boy's eyes made him see

how truly Tom was attached to the friend who had been so good to him ; “we’ll hope as he will be a-raised up agin ; and maybe this ’ill be a warning to him not to put his trust in chariots for the time to come, but to walk about more humble-like, as the apostles did, and to go about doing good, altogether different-like to what he’ve being a-doing of heretofore.”

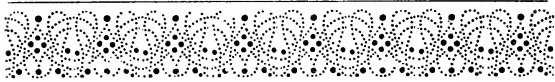
“He’s always a-going about doing of good,” interposed Job ; “and he’s terrible missed even now ; and when I went over for a bit of a walk to Sadbrooke Church, Sunday afternoon, I saw as he was missed there, sure enough—there weren’t half the people there as is when he preaches, and ’tweren’t a bit the same thing no how didn’t seem to I.”

“Our chapel filled beautiful last Sunday,” said Mr. Quaver ; “you should just have looked in there, Mr. Martin ; and the music

was uncommon fine—you wouldn't match it nowhere round in the neighbourhood, though 't isn't I as should say it; and we'd got a preacher as spoke up so, I couldn't scarce hear anything as anyone said all the evening arter. 'Twould ha' done you reel good if you'd just a-looked in—not to stop the whole time, if you hadn't a-liked, for we's not in bondage to forms, thanks be—you could ha' left any time."

"That's not my ways, thank'ee, Mr. Quaver," said Job; "and I hopes arter a bit, please God, young Mr. Knightly will be up in the pulpit to church agin—he ain't done his work yet, I'm thinking; and 'twill be a happy day for all of we when we see him here agen."

Mr. Quaver now left; he had made no converts to his views among those poor dark souls in Duck Lane.



CHAPTER XVI.

THE CURATE'S ILLNESS.

WHEN Mr. Knightly recognized his son in the gig, he at once feared that some accident would take place, and, as the terrified animal dashed past the Town Hall, he immediately left, following him as quickly as he could to Fairleigh. At the gate he met the servant coming out. Before the man could speak, he inquired :

“ Is Mr. James hurt ? ”

“ Yes, sir, he's been thrown out of the gig ; he doesn't know anyone. I'm going for Mr. Mills.”

He did not stop to ask anything further, but called after the man :

“ Fetch Dr. Smith too, at once,” and then went on to the house.

He found James laid on the sofa in the drawing-room, Mrs. Knightly and Alice hanging over him in speechless terror. He was quite insensible, and had been so ever since he was taken up. It was a time of terrible trouble to them, and the time that passed until the doctor arrived seemed almost interminable. At length Dr. Smith came ; Mr. Mills was absent. He looked very grave, had him carried up-stairs, and applied the usual remedies ; another surgeon was sent for, and his shoulder was set. Dr. Smith remained with him the greatest part of the night ; at length his patient opened his eyes, and seemed conscious, though he still did not speak. Soon after Dr. Smith left, desiring

that he was kept extremely quiet, and that he was sent for immediately if any change took place. On the stairs he met Cecil, not looking the least like himself.

“My dear boy, what are you doing up?” asked the doctor.

“I can’t sleep—it’s no use to try!” replied the boy, “so I waited here to ask you about James: Will he get better?” and his voice faltered as he spoke.

“Yes, to be sure he will,” replied Dr. Smith cheerily; “he’s better now, but you are not to go and see him, you are to keep very quiet, and keep your brothers so too—do you mind?”

And Cecil promised, and was so happy, as the doctor shook hands with him, and told him to go to bed, he could do no good, he had been too wretched to do so before; he had seen his brother soon after the accident,

and then to be sent away was very hard, he thought; but, now Jem was better, he shouldn't mind, and, boy-like, he fancied him almost well at once.

Early in the morning Dr. Smith returned, and before he left Mr. Mills arrived, and they saw their patient together. He was quite himself again, and they stated he was progressing favourably, and the extreme anxiety of the family was in some measure relieved.

Mr. Mills explained his absence to the perfect satisfaction of everyone—it had been wholly unavoidable—and he heard some account of what had been going on in the town; but they were still too anxious at Fairleigh to care to talk much, except on the subject in which they were all so interested.

Later in the day Alice went in to the Grange. They were extremely glad to see

her, and Maude burst into tears as she hung round her neck, kissing her.

“He’s better, dear,” said Alice, “much better, only he is very weak, and is not let to talk much. Dr. Smith has been so kind and attentive, we shall always remember it, I’m sure, it was such a dreadful fright to us all.”

“So it was to us, Alice, when we heard it,” said Mrs. Wilmot, “we have been in dreadful distress about your brother. I am so thankful he is doing well, but he really ought not to drive such horses.”

Maude had seen the colt led by that morning, looking so handsome and so fresh; she felt quite angry at seeing him unhurt, after having injured his master so severely, and he was quite out of her good graces; but Alice answered:

“It was not at all the fault of the horse; it was frightened by the mob; the only

wonder is, there were not more accidents. Mamma and I were so miserably anxious all day about papa—he was out, you know, and we were so sorry on his account that James was absent ; we expected to hear every hour of something wrong—we never thought of any danger from the colt, the boys are all so used to driving, that even when we heard the confusion in the house when James was brought in, at first we thought it was papa who had been hurt—it was such a dreadful day !”

Alice stopped suddenly in her description of what they had gone through. Maude had been growing paler and paler, as the recital went on, and when it came to this point, fainted away. She was laid on the sofa, and treated to the usual remedies in such cases, and Alice sat by her. When she was a little recovered, Mrs. Wilmot went out of the room, and left them together.

“He’s almost out of danger now dear, Dr. Smith says,”—Maude shivered ; “to-morrow, if all goes on well, there will be nothing to fear ; there are only mamma and I to be with him to-day, except papa looks in for a minute ; but then he will talk to papa ; but to-morrow Cecil is to go and sit with him—he has been so anxious—he is so very fond of James.”

Maude envied Cecil ; she did not answer, and Alice continued—

“James is so thankful the riot is over, and that there was so little harm done—we were obliged just to tell him that. It was such a blessing Dr. Smith was at home—what should we have done had he been absent, too?—we do like him so very much.”

People do not generally take to a new doctor at once ; but when they have met with kindness in trouble, they do not easily forget it, and Dr. Smith was already a favourite.

“I cannot think what business Mr. Mills had to be away,” said Maude; “I don’t a bit believe in his patient in the country—I think he wanted to keep out of trouble.”

It was very wrong of her to say this—how could she know anything whatever respecting Mr. Mills’s patients?—but it was excusable under the circumstances, as she was so anxious; and of course it showed what a high opinion she had of his professional talents.

“I’m sure, Maude, I can’t tell,” said Alice; “I do think it was very odd of him to be out so long, especially when they were in such danger at Woody Knoll; but perhaps, you know, he could not help it. I shall tell James how very anxious and distressed you have been about him, as soon as I may.”

Maude had been leaning her head on Alice’s shoulder, her golden hair untied, hanging in

long curls all round ; and Alice did think if James could only have seen her looking so lovely and so interested for him, he never could have resisted the sight another moment ; but he was just then not equal to see anything, lying as he was in a dark room, with closed curtains, and an aching head ; so as he might not be spoken to, she determined to say something to Maude. Maude lifted her head, and the colour came back brightly to her cheek.

“ Oh ! no, Alice, don't think of such a thing,” she said ; “ it would only trouble and worry him. It is nothing to him my being so anxious ; but we can none of us help being distressed at any accident that happens at Fairleigh ; but pray don't tell James that I was so foolish as to faint—I really could not help it ; it was all the fright of yesterday, I suppose.”

Alice knew it was the fright of yesterday, and believed she knew what part of it had been the cause : but when young ladies are engaged, they always consider themselves authorities in love affairs, so she determined to tell just as much as her experience should judge right. Indeed, none of their friends were at all satisfied at the state of things between James and Marie : Mrs. Wilmore fully believed that he was attached to her daughter, and she did not think him one likely to change : she could not imagine what had come between them—she sometimes thought, could it be possible that James never intended to marry at all, and meant to devote himself to a sort of monastic life ?—she could not quite believe this was the case : and yet it seemed the only solution to the mystery. He was certainly very much altered of late, and appeared greatly out of spirits : she

was not surprised that he should be so, and really fond as Mrs. Wilmot was of him, it cannot be wondered at if she was really angry and annoyed with him, now she saw how much her child's happiness was endangered by his treatment of her. But his accident had renewed the old feeling of affection, and they were as anxious at the Grange as at Fairleigh ; and Alice did feel very sorry for Maude, who could scarcely show how deeply her feelings were engaged in everything connected with James.

“I don't think anything would do him so much good as knowing that you really cared for him, Maude,” she said. “I wish Hugh had not come home last Christmas—everything seems to have gone wrong since ; but if, as I trust, James gets better again soon, I hope we shall be all very happy. I shall come in again to-morrow morning, and send

one of the boys in this evening to tell you how he is going on."

She kissed Maude.

"Oh! do come in, Alice; those riots yesterday have quite upset me, I think—I shall be so glad to see you. But pray, pray don't tell anybody I was so foolish—it does seem so very silly!"

Cecil came in during the evening, with a continued good report; and Alice gave the same the next morning. "James was doing very well," she said. But after a few days he did not get on so quickly. Alice observed, whenever she came into the room, that he turned round, and then looked away again, as if disappointed. She was not at all vexed at this—she knew who he was looking for, and though she did not consider he had any right to expect her, and probably did not, still she was glad to see him look. He had a

sofa put in his study, and used to lay there ; and Cecil was a great deal with him. The partridges were stuffed, and hung in a neat little case over a bookstand.

“ I think, Jem, they look uncommon nice,” said Cecil ; “ birds always set up nice when they’re well shot.”

But Cecil and his younger brothers left for school before James was out of his study, for his recovery was very slow. Mr. Saxon came several times to see him.

“ I am very sorry, James,” he said, the first visit, “ that it has come to this. I must say I always expected it. I never thought so seriously of the riot as your father, and many others did ; and it has all quieted down as I expected ; but that colt of yours is positively unsafe—I do hope you will never ride or drive it again.”

This was too much to expect. Notwith-

standing his weakness and low spirits, James laughed.

“As soon as I can use my arm, I certainly hope to be out on him again. Poor fellow! he meant no harm. Had I known anything of what was going on, of course I should have gone another way; but I was in the confusion before I knew anything was wrong, and then it all happened in such a hurry, I can scarcely even now recollect much about it.”

“Ah, well,” said the rector, “young people will have their own way—they are all alike, wild and reckless. I hoped you had had a lesson, and would have been more careful.”

James thought he had never done anything at all like facing the mob, but he did not say so; he inquired after parish matters.

“Ah, it’s all quiet enough now again, and I have looked in once or twice at your school for you, and have managed to get your church

served, so you have only to keep quiet, and get round again."

"I've been thinking, though, since I have been laid up," he said, "how very little I do; I should like to take a class sometimes of the bigger boys in Sadborough."

"What! more teaching; you have a perfect mania for it, James, with the boys and the colt; but if it's your vocation, I don't want to stand in your way."

He thanked the rector warmly for all his kindness, especially as to the trouble he had taken about his church and school. He never supposed Mr. Saxon would have thought of looking after the latter, but when he was able to go there again, he found that he had been very often. The rector left again, telling his curate not to trouble himself about parish matters, but to keep himself quiet. And he did keep quiet, very quiet, and it did not

seem to do him much good. He would lay plans frequently, with something of his old energy, as to what he intended to do as soon as he was able, and then for a few days again he would be quite unequal to doing the least thing. The doctors, though they agreed in some degree as to treatment, disagreed as to his state.

“It had been a severe shock to the nervous system,” they both said; but one added, “It was only his having been so very quiet that had got him round at all;” the other considered if he could be induced to take some interest in his recovery, he would get well much quicker.

“It is beautiful to see him so sweetly resigned,” said Mr. Mills.

“It is very provoking that he should be so unnaturally indifferent,” was the remark of Dr. Smith.

But youth and a good constitution, and the natural springing back to life that there must be at his age, and with his disposition, triumphed, and he did recover, though he felt very lifeless, and extremely old, with no energy whatever; but he considered this all very wrong, and thought it was his duty to try. He would begin to work again; his arm was not strong, and his head still ached with much exertion, but it would not do to give way; the less he liked beginning, the more necessary he should not delay doing so. He therefore went out, and met Maude, and got caught in a shower, and was rather worse. The doctor who recommended quiet said it was the exertion; the one who had advised him to go out said it was the shower; they could not quite make out the case, but perhaps they found it all out some day.



CHAPTER XVII.

THE CURATE MEETS MAUDE.

NOTWITHSTANDING the blight that had fallen on her own happiness, Maude continued her visits to the Martins' cottage. She had been prevented going for some days by the riots, but these had entirely sobered down, and Sadborough had relapsed into its usual state of quiescence. They were all very glad to see her again; they had known the cause of the interruption in her visits, and Tom had been anxiously looking out for her return.

The poor cottage looked poorer than usual; Job had been out of work since the fire at

Sadbrooke, and although he got an occasional day's work, it did not amount to much. Nanny was looking careworn and anxious, the children hungry and sickly, and Tom was much changed, even since the time Maude had last seen him. She sat down and began to talk; he cheered up a little, as he always did when she was there, and she had not long been in the cottage before the Irish girl came in. They recognized each other in a moment. Maude had never forgotten the beautiful girl with the laces, who had attracted her attention so much, and Molly had often since talked to Tom of the pretty lady, just like St. Catherine in the picture, whom she had met. He had always said it must be Miss Maude, so he introduced them to each other, in his way.

“Molly often comes to see me, Miss Maude,” he said; “it does me good, and her likes to hear me read a bit when I’m well

enough, and it's somewhere for her to sit down and rest a bit."

"Yes, they's very kind to I here," said the girl. "I never had no reg'lar home like, and I likes to come in and sit down a bit."

Maude began to read as usual; she chose the chapter that speaks of the many mansions in the Father's house. Molly sat on her favourite seat, the little wooden stool, just by Tom, with her hand on her cheek, resting her elbow on her knee. She looked up full at Maude, drinking in, as it were, every word as she heard it.

"I wonder what heaven is like?" said Tom, after she had finished the chapter. "I've looked up so often at they golden clouds, when the sun sets, and thought as those many mansions were in there, all hidden from we now, deep down like amid the glory, and there's plenty of room in 'em for all—is there

not, Miss Maude, and welcome, too? where the angels sing, and where the river of life flows, and the leaves of the trees are for the healing of the people? How beautiful it must be in among they golden clouds!”

Maude had often looked at them too, gazing up, as it were, through the seen into the unseen.

“I’ve thought they was angels’ wings often,” said Mary; “there are angels in heaven, you know; and the Blessed Virgin is up among ’em too—I oftimes think of that.”

“There is One in heaven who is more, far more, to us than any other, Mary,” said Maude, “even the Lord Jesus Christ.”

She felt she ought to say something, but she was very shy of talking, it was different from reading, or singing a hymn.

“So Tom says,” said the girl, “and so ’twere written down where you was reading. I never heerd that book afore I comed here—

I could listen to it till I felt a'most as if there was nothing else worth a-caring for; then I haven't much to care for, that's sartain!"

Tom put out his hand and tried to touch hers, but she did not move. Maude looked at her pitifully—that beautiful girl, so young, with life only just opening, had she really nothing to look forward to on earth?

“Have you not any father or mother to take care of you, or any home?”

“Mother's dead, and father's always a-travelling about. I didn't use to mind it, but the last journey as I made I was all alone, and was took't bad. The folks where I was were kind at first, but arter a bit they thought I was shamming, or summut, and said as I must go. I never thought to have got here alive, and ever since I feels so tired like, it rests me a bit to come here, and to hear Tom read or talk.”

Maude was just then feeling for herself that life was not all bright, the last few weeks had clouded her happiness strangely, but now she thought she must surely be very wicked to fret over her own lot, when there were others whose portion was one of such deep destitution, such utter loneliness.

“I must not go till I have sung to you, Tom,” she said.

It was “Jerusalem the golden,” then the old favourite, “There is a land of pure delight.” They suited the chapter, and harmonised with all their thoughts.

Maude felt it was beautiful. The “sweet fields beyond the swelling flood” seemed almost as if brought before her, and yet it was not the deep reality for her it was for the other two. The poor have often so little to tie them to earth, that when Faith and Hope tell of a brighter shore, the truths come before them

with a vividness that others can hardly understand; and let people carp and cavil as they will, there are special promises in God's word to those who are poor in this world, unless they throw them from them by their own sin. Mary and Tom were not then in Duck Lane—he was less in it every day, more and more living amid the unseen realities.

When Maude had finished she looked at the girl. She had never changed her attitude; her shawl had fallen off; she was crying, very softly and quietly, but the drops were rolling thick and fast down her cheek. Hers was one of the very few faces of whom it is not poetic fiction to say they are beautiful in tears; her cheek was flushed rather brighter than usual, her large eyes looked darker and more lustrous through the crystal lens that was over them, and the drops sparkled on the long lashes.

When Maude rose, she caught her hand and pressed it to her lips. Tom also took leave of Maude, saying :

“ Please come again soon, Miss Maude ; it’s so lonesome when I don’t see either you or Mr. Knightly, and he can’t come now.”

It was a plea that touched Maude ; she understood that it must be lonesome without Mr. Knightly, and she promised to come again soon. She remembered the day when James asked her first to go to the cottage to supply his place. It had been, in a great measure, to please him that she went then, but since she had become really interested in her visits, she had quite given up the thought that anything she could do would please him.

She had not gone very far from the cottage when she saw Mary by her side.

“ Do you often go to read to Tom, Miss Maude ?” she asked.

“ Yes, I do, he likes it, and, if you like it, I hope you will come again.”

“ Does Jack ever come in ?”

“ Sometimes—not very often.”

“ I wish so much you would read to Jack,” said Molly ; “ he doesn’t mind Tom or me, mayhap he’d mind you.”

“ What do you want him to mind ?” inquired Maude.

“ Oh ! nothing partic’lar, they’s all good people they Martins, only Jack gets about a good bit, and Tom and I wish he could hear you read, that’s all.”

Maude had no time to reply ; before she could speak the girl was on the opposite side of the street, selling her laces to passing customers. She felt very much interested in Mary, she would have liked to have told James about her ; but even if he were well, she felt she could not say much to him now,

but she thought, had they been as friendly as formerly, they might have settled something for the poor girl.

She went several times the next week or two to Duck Lane, and sometimes saw Molly, but not often. One day it had been very fine when she left home, with a white frost on the ground, and the sun shining very bright; but the weather changed while she was at the cottage, and she had not gone from it more than a few steps when it began to rain heavily. She was at some distance from home, and did not know where to take shelter. Presently she saw James Knightly at some little distance from her; she did not think he could see her, but the next moment he was at her side, and sheltering her with his umbrella. It was the first time she had seen him since his illness; he was looking very pale, and held the umbrella in his left

hand, the other arm being still in a sling.

She inquired whether he felt strong again—she thought it was a long walk for him? She was obliged to make her questions short, and rather indifferent, for she felt as if she should break down; the seeing him brought to her mind all he must have suffered.

He told her he was quite well now, only lazy; did not much like getting out, but had come to try whether it would not do him good. He was very glad he had met her, he should at least save her from getting wet. She begged him to let her carry the umbrella, it must be too heavy for him in his left hand; but he would not hear of it. And then each relapsed into silence. It was so like old times to be walking in this way together, so unlike that there should be such a strange constraint between them.

After a little while she began to talk of

Tom, saying she had been to see him, and how happy he was, notwithstanding his suffering; she could scarcely understand it.

“He is near the Eternal World, Maude!” he replied. “Do we not always notice at eventide, when the colours are brightest in the sky, there is darkness shadowing over the earth? It is eventide with Tom—the world is fading from him—it is nothing to him now. What a blessing that the light for him should be growing brighter and brighter in the heaven!”

“It can be only that hope that makes him so contented in his poor home,” she said. “It is quite pleasant to go and see him!”

“You will never regret your visits here, Maude, I am sure,” was the reply. “Whatever may be the blessings and happiness of your own future happy lot, you will always look back, I believe, with something of pleasure to the time when you went to see that

poor boy ; and the lessons we learn from the poor are not things to be forgotten—from those among them, I mean, who are ‘ rich in faith, heirs of the kingdom ! ’ ”

She looked up at him as he spoke of her own happy lot, with such a glance of child-like, innocent inquiry, mingled with a look very like reproach—it was wonderful how he could withstand it ; and as she did so, she met his eyes looking down on her with a gaze so full of deep, earnest love, that hers dropped beneath it. There were words hovering on his lips then, that, had they been spoken, would in a moment have chased away every cloud.

But at that very moment the image of Hugh, with the look of triumph and rapture on his face, which he saw when he was returning the purse to his pocket, the evening before he left, seemed to stand visibly between

himself and Maude ; so the words remained unspoken, and the feelings that prompted them were driven back into his heart, to be all the deeper printed there, because they were allowed no exit.

Instead of speaking, he opened the gate that led to the Grange, and, after seeing her up to the house, took a colder farewell than could have been expected from their previous conversation ; and, as was said in the last chapter, was rather worse on his return home than before he went out, and he did not repeat the experiment for some days.

Maude scarcely ever again saw the Irish girl—she was generally out in the morning, and a change in her place of residence made it easier for her to go into the Martins' of an evening. Sometimes when she did so, Jack would stay and read, to please them ; then she would sit in her old attitude, drinking in

the words, and listening to them as they fell from his lips, broken, and spelt, and stammered out, as if she desired nothing more. And so the days went on.

Hugh was working on in town, determined to come down at Easter—looking forward to the long, dreary ride as to a great delight—he would come, if it was only for one day. Till then he pressed the little purse closer to his heart, and worked, and lived, and loved on hope.

James was arranging plans for work to be done in Sadborough, that would be infinitely beyond his strength ; but it was well for him that he had something to think of. He was by no means sure but that he should still go abroad ; yet he would do nothing in a hurry. Mr. Saxon was very sorry to see him so out of spirits, and gave in to any suggestion, in the hopes of rousing him ; but at

the same time added continued injunctions to keep quiet. But he did not feel that quiet did him good, so, driving Maude's image back into the depth of his heart, he endeavoured to forget his love, but succeeded very badly in the attempt. And Maude, pretty, sweet, gentle Maude, was weeping bitter tears over her lost love.

For the rest, Widow Brown's lodger was often absent from home a week or more at a time; but when he was at SADBROOKE, Jem was constantly with him; and Jack was much more with both of them than could turn out to his own advantage. And Mary, with the deep vehement love of her nature and her race, was clinging to and watching over the boy, who scarcely gave her a thought in return; and Tom, poor, weary Tom, was day by day becoming more worn and more weary. His friends on earth said—"It was sad to

see him suffering, and lingering so long ; it would be a mercy when he was taken home.”

But waiting angels knew that there was no delay—the great Lord of the harvest, who watches every blade and every ear, at the moment when the corn was fully ripe, would put in the sickle—the time for the reaping would be come.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.



UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA



3 0112 041776094